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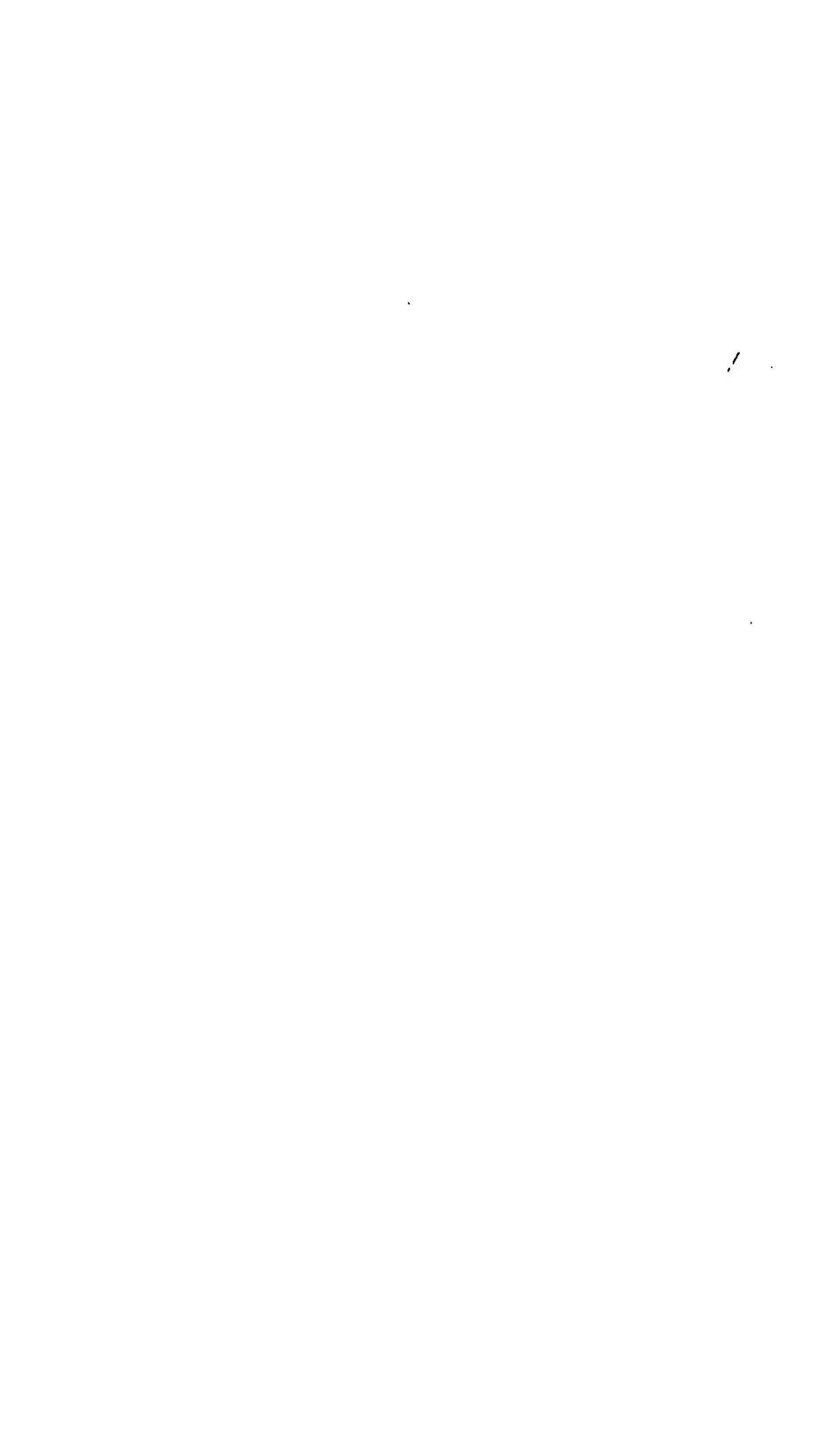












# CONTROL

THEORY AND PRACTICE

BY J. H. KELLY

**A**

# **COMPREHENSIVE VIEW**

**OF THE**

**LEADING AND MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES**

**OF**

**NATURAL AND REVEALED**

**RELIGION :**

**DIGESTED IN SUCH ORDER AS TO PRESENT TO THE PIOUS AND REFLECTING**

**MIND, A BASIS FOR THE SUPERSTRUCTURE OF THE ENTIRE**

**SYSTEM OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.**

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**BY THE REV. SAMUEL STANHOPE SMITH, D.D. LL.D.**

**LATE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW-JERSEY.**

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**1815.**

THE HISTORY OF  
THE WILKINSON

1774-1775

THE HISTORY OF  
THE WILKINSON

# PRELIMINARY NOTICES

AND

## REFLECTIONS.

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NO doubt can exist in the mind of a judicious christian, but that the Sacred Scriptures comprise the most complete development of the entire system of our holy religion. But the extent and variety of information which they embrace, the loose and narrative style in which a great portion of them is written, and the picturesque and poetic imagery in which others are clothed, have presented an occasion both to ingenious and to feeble minded men, to build upon them a multitude of contending opinions, each supported by detached expressions collected from these divine oracles, or by interpretations, either plausible or forced, imposed upon their language. Divines, in order to correct or restrain this ambiguous diversity of sentiment, have endeavoured to reduce the whole of the doctrines of the sacred writings to certain definite principles, arranged in scientific order, so as mutually to illustrate and support one another. This would have been a scheme sufficiently rational, if system writers had confined their object to digesting the diffusive and expanded phraseology of the scriptures into a few simple and connected propositions, intended to present the substance of the whole to the mind, under one view. But their design has become so mingled with the discordant theories of different writers, that their extended discussions on each topic, have often destroyed the simplicity of the gospel, and led their readers, as well as disposed the writers themselves, to substitute human reason for the word of God. Instead of presenting a brief analysis of the doctrines contained in the Bible, they have too frequently attempted to make their respective explanations of the system of divine truth an entire library of theological science :—It has occurred to the author that it would be desirable to students in that sphere of knowledge, to have its principal subjects distinctly pointed out, and clearly illustrated, in a short compass, in order to direct their future inquiries, and so to guard their future addresses from the pulpit, from blending discordant opinions; that they should, in no point, err against the general system of evangelic truth. He further hoped that such a compendious view might usefully aid the private christian, in examining the sacred scriptures, and pursuing throughout the whole, the connected thread of christian doctrine.

These are the objects to which his attention has been chiefly directed in the following discourses designed to embrace a very compendious scheme of the leading



Theology. This design very early occupied  
 lies under the superintendence of that eminent  
 r. Witherspoon. At the request of a number  
 aduates of the college, at that time residing in  
 their theological studies, of whom the author  
 on to commence a course of lectures on this  
 week till the Autumn of 1773, when different  
 e greater portion of the class, it was of course  
 led in his course, intermixing his lectures with  
 s to the Covenant of Grace. The clear *method*  
 ts, particularly the *Trinity* and the *Covenants*,  
 he author acknowledges with pride, the assist-  
 that time from the mouth of the speaker. Of  
 zement. which was. or probably could be made

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ERRATA.

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character of the Messiah in italic letters.

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**A COMPENDIOUS SYSTEM  
OF  
NATURAL AND REVEALED  
THEOLOGY;**

**EMBRACING, IN THE SECOND PART, A CONCISE VIEW OF  
THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.**

**PART I.  
OF NATURAL RELIGION:**

**(CONTAINING,**

- 1st. THE EVIDENCES OF THE BEING OF GOD.**
  - 2d. THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD.**
  - 3d. THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN DUTY.**
  - 4th. THE PROBABLE EVIDENCES OF A FUTURE STATE.**
-



# LECTURES,

&c.

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## OF NATURAL THEOLOGY.

### OF THE BEING OF GOD.

**NATURAL** Theology consists in the knowledge of those truths concerning the being and attributes of God; the principles of human duty, and the probable expectations of a future state of existence to give efficacy to those principles, which are discoverable by reason alone. It commences with the investigation of the evidences of the existence of God, Almighty, and Eternal; which are usually derived from two sources,—the necessary nature of our ideas,—and the obvious structure of the universe. Both these modes of proof, which have been distinguished in the schools by scientific terms of discrimination, rest on one common principle, or necessary idea,—that every thing which begins to be must have a cause of its existence. Admitting this truth, which cannot well be controverted by reason, it results as a necessary consequence, either that the universe consists of an eternal succession of causes, dependent one upon another; or we must look for its existence in some first principle, eternal, unproduced, the source of all motion and power in the operations of nature,



to be found only in itself, and the

The idea of an eternal succes-  
and imperfect, and all dependent,  
is too evident an absurdity to be  
mind. We are obliged therefore  
tive—the existence of an original  
being, from which all things else  
nce, then, exists this first cause?  
can find no reason of its existence

the same being. This first, and sole cause of all things in the universe, must also be Almighty ; for whatever can exist, can exist only by him. And finally, he must be all-wise, as knowing the natures and powers of all things possible ; for nothing is possible, but by him, and every thing is possible that he wills.

This is a very brief and partial sketch of the scientific mode of reasoning, or reasoning a priori, as the schoolmen call it, on this subject. The most profound and masterly example of it, which exists, perhaps in any language, is to be found in the *demonstration of the being and attributes of God*, by Dr. Samuel Clarke, of England. But, I confess, these subtle arguments of a very refined speculation, are little calculated to produce any deep and permanent conviction on the mind. The extreme abstraction of the ideas, although they do great credit to the ingenuity of that celebrated author, can be comprehended only by a few reflecting men ; and the most speculative philosopher finds the effort to grasp them, exhaust the sensibility of the heart, and weaken upon it the practical impressions of virtue and piety.

The second, or popular mode of reasoning, is infinitely more simple and obvious. And consists of a species of argument which naturally offers itself to every man, as soon as he opens his eyes with intelligence upon the world. A kind of evidence here suggests itself which reaches the simplest

comes more luminous and interesting  
and our observation and inquiries in-

When we behold its order, varie-  
proportion, and correspondence of all  
demonstrations of wisdom and design,  
in the mineral and vegetable worlds, in the struc-  
ture of the planetary system, and, as far as we  
can see of the universe, can we forbear to ac-  
knowledge an intelligent cause, which has planned  
it? an omnipotent cause, which has

rest basis, when prudently investigated, of natural theology, and an excellent introduction and support to revelation. I recommend it, likewise, as a study, which contributes peculiarly to purify, exalt, and delight the mind; and, along with the charming enthusiasm of piety, to strengthen the most solid foundations of virtue, while, to use an expression of Malebranche, "it sees all things in God, and God in all things."

This argument we may see admirably illustrated by the famous Genevan philosopher Bonnet, and by those very respectable English writers, Derham, and Ray. But perhaps no writer has treated it with more closeness, perspicuity, and irresistible evidence, than Dr. Paley in his treatise on *natural theology*. In those works, may be seen that mechanical contrivance, that correspondence of parts, that adaptation of means to their respective ends, through all the productions of nature, which are the most unequivocal indications of wisdom and design, as well as of power and goodness, in its author. "*Final causes*, says a very judicious writer, may be considered as the language in which the existence of God is revealed to man. In this language, the sign is natural, and the interpretation instinctive."—Ferg. ins. p. 3. ch. 1. s. 2.

Another argument to the same end has justly been derived from the universal concurrence of mankind in the assertion and belief of this important principle. The general senti-

are always found to point to truth. Perceptions resulting immediately from their objects; or conclusions which are in the mind, like the *first truths* of geometry arising out of the comparison of our senses. The concurrence of all nations, in the belief of the existence of a God, is a decisive proof, either, that it is a natural truth, arising necessarily from the human mind, and entitled to the same im-

g from its original and essential principle, not less extraordinary than either from the accidental collision of atoms, or which, from some interior, and independent cause, thrown themselves into orbits conformable to perfect mathematical exactness, and which ensure undeviating constancy in the same accidental collision, roots, and seeds, whence the whole vegeta-

ly examples of both, in the structure of things, and in the revolutions of what we call providence? It is, I conceive, a sufficient answer, to deny the existence of either, and to challenge an antagonist to produce an instance.—For, what is chance?—Only a name to cover our ignorance of the cause of any event. Nothing can happen by accident in the government of an infinitely wise, and powerful being. All events depend upon a certain concatenation of causes. The cast of a die is as certainly governed by the laws of matter and motion, as the greater movements of the planets. Disorder in the works of nature exists only in the imperfection of our own understanding. This is certain, with regard to all the arrangements of nature, that, in proportion as her laws have been more clearly developed, and her operations more distinctly understood, those phenomena, which formerly were esteemed to be irregularities, are now discovered to be directed by the most wise, certain, and permanent laws.—One conclusion will obtrude itself on every reflecting mind; that, since nature, as far as we can discern her operations, contains, even to our imperfect reason, the most obvious indications of intelligence, design, and goodness, if there be any parts of it, which we are unable to interpret, in perfect coincidence with the general system, this ought to be ascribed solely to the narrow sphere to which our intellectual vision is circumscribed. We cannot doubt, but that the same wisdom, which we perceive in that portion which we do comprehend, pervades all the works of the same author.

tly and justly remarked, that the universal laws, which never change their nature, are not adapted to the desires of men, or the conveniences of the system, and, therefore, they are productive of partial and accidental evils, as a drought there, a contagion, or an earthquake, involve individuals in distress;—but the laws of the physical world are among the greatest benefits to mankind. Among other benefits,



commend themselves so obviously to the common sense of mankind, as to admit of little controversy, except with regard to those natural events which, in their first aspect, seem contrary to our apprehensions of his infinite goodness.

The attributes, then, of the Divine Mind may be arranged under two heads,—the natural, and the moral.—Under the former, are comprehended his spirituality, unity, eternity, omnipresence, power and wisdom;—under the latter, his holiness, justice, and goodness.

The spirituality of the divine nature is a property opposed to every form, or refinement of matter; and may be regarded as distinguishing the essence of the Supreme Mind, from that fine, but powerful influence, the result of the material organization of the universe, which some philosophers have substituted in the room of the Deity, and made the immediate cause of a universal necessity, or fate. It is opposed, likewise, to the opinion of those, who hold the Deity to be the soul of the world; that is, a certain power which, though intelligent, is still only a refinement of matter,—a kind of spirit, or gas thrown off from the infinite system of its motions, or its original fermentations.

All just philosophy has considered matter as essentially inert, and incapable of beginning motion. Spirit, as we learn from our own experience, possesses a self-motive pow-

iving motion to other things. The  
 nents of the universe, therefore, are  
 it, who formed it, and gave it that  
 a of combined motion by which its

which we have of spirit, is derived  
 vn minds, the essence of which we  
 and volition. But it would be im-

to be silent concerning it, lest we should unawares awaken a degrading spirit of superstition. On subjects so remote from the sphere of human intellect and observation, in no department of science, has conjecture or hypothesis ever led philosophy one step nearer to truth. It is even doubtful if the erring lights of false science do not lead the mind farther astray from the true principles of nature than, the torpid dullness of absolute ignorance.

Of the almighty power, and infinite wisdom of the Deity, there can exist no doubt in the minds of those who acknowledge his being. No more can we doubt of his eternal existence, and universal presence, although we are not able to form distinct and definite ideas concerning his relations to infinite duration, and space. I shall, therefore, not consume your time in attempting to solve the many abstruse and probably useless, and, to human intellect, inexplicable questions, which have been raised on these subjects by ingenious men;—but proceed to consider his moral attributes, holiness, goodness, and justice.

Holiness is a term used chiefly by divines, and borrowed from the sacred scriptures, to express the purity of the divine nature, and its infinite distance from all moral imperfection. It is, perhaps, the best and strongest word in our language to convey the idea of his unchangeable love of the eternal and essential rectitude of the moral law, which he

tional creatures, whose outlines be  
can conscience, but the perfect rule  
only in his revealed word. And it  
n its meaning, not only a pure and  
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ission, or violation of the duties of  
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strongly, associate themselves with the ideas of beneficence in their author. It is farther confirmed by the existence of so many tribes of creatures capable in a high degree of pleasurable sensation, and actually enjoying it in different ways. All these facts contribute to impress on the mind an irresistible conviction of the benevolence of the Creator. When we contemplate an individual animal, what an immense complexity of parts do we observe combined in one system, all contributing to the preservation and enjoyment of the creature, which manifestly indicate the will and intention of the author; and shew the pains and contrivance, if these terms may be applied to the Deity, which he has used to render that creature comfortable and happy. But, when we behold creation filled with innumerable species of being, and, under each species, innumerable individuals, down to the meanest insect tribes, in which we discern the same multiplicity of organs, and the same systematic combination, and subserviency to the purposes of enjoyment, how does the evidence of the divine benignity and goodness rise in our view? The air, the earth, the sea, are full of animated and happy being. Men often overlook these examples of benevolent design, sometimes, from not perceiving the immediate utility of the creatures in the system of creation, and sometimes, from their extreme minuteness. But the minutest insect, is, equally with the largest, or most rational animal, susceptible of the most exquisite sensations of happy existence. And, in the eye of the infinite being, there is

even an insect and a man, has an  
objective. Every creature, in its re-  
lated to some useful purpose in the

of natural historians, that the design  
is not only in the structure of animal  
bodies, the purposes of preserva-

and nobler field of happiness to man, which it is hardly necessary at present to survey.

But it is scarcely requisite to spend your time in proving the reality of the divine goodness, which is borne in so many examples on the whole face of nature, as to account for some appearances, and to remove some objections, which have been thought to contradict it in the order of divine providence. These consist in the numerous evils evidently mingled with good in the economy of the world.

The preponderance of good over evil, in the general order of things, is acknowledged to be manifest and great. But the objectors reply, that if God were perfectly benevolent, and, at the same time, omnipotent, he would not have permitted the existence of partial evil. This is pronouncing on an infinite system from our contracted views.—Can we say, that, in a universe benevolently constructed, there ought to be no gradation of being? Or, if gradation be admitted in perfect consistency with the infinite benignity of the Creator, is it not conceivable that a creature of superior powers of intelligence and enjoyment, may, by a certain admixture of pain, be brought, in the scale of happiness, to the grade of one of inferior powers, but exempt from suffering, and who shall have no complaint to prefer against the benevolence of providence? The reflection may apply to a nation, to a species of being, to a world. How far superior,

then, may this world be, with all its sufferings, to other systems—which have no such evils to allay a happiness, which, however, may be constituted on an inferior standard of sensibility, or of intellect? Would a man of high sensibilities, or of high intellectual powers, though they may often be the occasion of many errors, or of keen anguish, be willing to forego their pleasures, in order that he might be reduced to an apathy that would render him insensible to suffering? Let us balance our goods against our evils, our sufferings against our enjoyments, and consider ourselves as completely happy in that grade of felicity, which is marked by the surplus of the one above the other. By such a calculation, how might mankind extinguish every complaint of the evils of life, and justify perfectly the benignity of the Creator. The conclusion, therefore, which each individual ought, in this way, to frame with respect to himself, a true philosopher may justly infer for the whole species; unless any man should be so foolish as to imagine, that existence alone gives him a claim on the beneficence of his Maker for the highest grade of felicity.

• •

But, why, it may be asked, should we be left to estimate our grade in the scale of happy being by the surplusage of pleasure above pain? or why should pain exist at all in the system of a purely benevolent being?—Satisfactorily to answer these, and a thousand other inquiries, which might be



instituted on this subject, would, probably, require a knowledge of the nature, and the infinite relations of the universe, which none but the Deity himself can possess. We can, therefore, expect only from revelation the information which we desire, as far as he is pleased to impart it. But while we are compelled to resort to the feeble lights of our own reason alone, for a solution of the difficulties which, spring out of the combinations of an infinite system, we must be contented with such probabilities only as it can yield us.\* If, in the scale of existence, then, there be a place for such a being as man with just such a measure of intellect, and sensibility, and with just such principles of action, continually requiring excitement, and correction; and, especially, if it be conceived that he is placed in the present world, in a state of discipline, and probation, for a future period, and a higher condition of existence, a supposition which, to philosophy, is as probable, as, to religion, it is certain, may not all the pains which enter into the moral culture of this life, be regarded as the discipline of a wise and gracious parent, and, therefore, as essential parts of a most benevolent system? Let us contemplate the relation which the pains necessarily incident to

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\* Rejoicing, however, that when we have explored reason to the utmost, we, as christians, still enjoy the superior illumination of the sacred scriptures, whence, if we cannot derive such lights as will satisfy every inquiry of an ambitious curiosity, we may, at least, draw competent satisfaction for an humble and rational piety; particularly, with regard to this question, why human nature exists in its present state of imperfection, requiring the corrections and discipline of the pains and sufferings, which in this state are attached to it?

[illegible]

gard them as a part of the benevolent discipline of our heavenly Father? They are the correctors of the passions,—they assist the habits of reflection,—and often recall the mind from pursuits injurious to its virtue, and its true interests.

But, instead of examining the various evils of life, and shewing how the goodness of God is affected in permitting their existence, I shall select only a few; believing that, if, in these, the benevolence of the divine administration can be justified, even to our limited understanding, a hint may be suggested, or a clue given, by which its vindication may be pursued in other cases.—For example, take the circumstances attending our entrance into the world, and our departure from it, which have been thought to involve serious objections against the benignity of the Creator. With regard to the former, it may be fairly maintained, that the pains of bearing, nursing, and educating children, with the diseases and dangers of infancy, which seem, at first view, to be peculiar afflictions on the human race, will be found, on examining their connexions, and all their relations, to be among the chief causes of the existence of society, and the felicity of social life. If children, like the young of other animals, were able to run as soon as born, and procure their own subsistence, with almost no dependence on the care of a parent, the powerful ties, and sweet endearments of parental affection, and of filial duty, would be, in a great measure, un-

w constituted, have to the improve-  
 consequently, to its happiness.—  
 outh to rouse the industry, and ha-  
 s faculties of body, and mind, on  
 efection principally depend. A pa-  
 vants should be spontaneously sup-  
 : of the soil, and all his senses gra-  
 ts beauty, and luxuriant sweets,  
 nan character, and sink the noblest

the structure of our nature. Death is only the way of giving to successive generations, the opportunity and the means of existence. If this part of the plan of divine providence must be changed, the whole order of life must be changed with it. There could be no such creature as man in the scale of being. The institution of the sexes must be destroyed; the multiplication of the species must cease. The modes of subsistence, on the products of the earth, which can sustain only a definite number, must be done away. And, with these, as the whole state of human life, is connected together by a close unbroken chain, must cease the operations of agriculture, and the entire system of the present occupations and pursuits of men. Man, himself, would be the first to object to such a new order of things.—If death, then, be a necessary part of the human economy, and, to man himself, it would be undesirable to change it, if it must be accompanied with so many other changes, still more unfriendly to the comfort, and wishes of mankind, the only question which remains is, in what manner it may be best accomplished, so as to attain the most useful ends of its institution?—If even the whole of human existence were to be terminated by death, this last act of our being, so justly formidable to our frailty and imperfection, is but a momentary pang, which has been far overpaid by the pleasures of life; but if, as religion assures us, and philosophy renders probable, this life is only a period of discipline and probation for another state of being, and death is the avenue through

nd happiness of domestic society  
d civil society, of which domestic is  
pal support, could not exist. Man  
ferocious savage. The facility of  
ir early independence on a parent's  
ongest encouragement to a vagrant,  
ge, destructive of all the virtues,  
ests of human nature. Besides, the

would be deplorably at a loss to find her way, in the maze of doubts, and perplexities, which attend their existence, in the economy of a benevolent Deity, if revelation did not put a filament in her hand, or extend a taper before her footsteps, to conduct her through the labyrinth. The elucidation of this subject belongs to the second part of this treatise, and will receive all the lights, which we can shed upon it from the holy scriptures, under the heads of the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace.

The only attribute which remains to be considered is that of justice. It is an invariable determination in the Divine Mind, to render to all his creatures according to their works,—to the virtuous, reward,—to the vicious, punishment. This attribute we ascribe to God from the dictates of conscience, and the sentiments of justice in our own breasts.—As philosophy delights to trace the most complicated causes and effects to the simplest principles, justice may, perhaps, be considered as only one expression of infinite benevolence, in which, by proper correctives, restraints, and examples, the injurious consequences of the passions may be prevented, and individuals deterred from seeking their own enjoyments, by the sacrifice of a greater good, in violating the general laws of order and happiness.

Justice has, by divines, been distinguished into two kinds,—distributive, and vindictive. The former has been

y be applied for the reformation, as  
e offender ; the latter is conceived to  
shment on vice, simply for its own  
ut any respect to the reformation of  
terior regard to a farther good end,  
d of the universe. Conscience, in  
nsions, makes us perceive that guilt  
and, in its anticipations, in conse-



of a mediator, perfectly adequate to render this satisfaction, in order to the exercise of mercy and forgiveness to the human sinner. The discussion of this question also, belongs to the second branch of this treatise, and will find its place under the head of the covenant of grace.

### III. OF THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN DUTY.

*In the science of Natural Religion, the first subject of investigation is the existence and perfections of Almighty God the Creator; whence we may learn the duties of human nature, as they relate to the various beings with whom we are connected. Virtue is the subject of supreme concern to mankind. It is the performance of all our duties from proper principles, and with right affections. The detail of these duties and affections, as far as nature simply is our guide, is beautifully pursued in the two celebrated treatises of the Roman orator, concerning the divine nature and human duty.\* They would be too tedious to be detailed in the present system. All I shall aim at, in this place, therefore, will be to reduce them under proper classes, in such a manner, as to exhibit a distinct, and systematic view of their general principles, and very briefly to present the ground and reasons of each.*

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\* M. T. Cicero de natura deorum,—et de officiis.

y may be divided in different ways, principles from which they spring, exercise, or according to the objects. The former division was general-ent philosophers, who classed them ce, prudence, temperance, and for- more commonly employed by chris- them under the heads of the duties

as obedience to *him*. The particular duties, terminate immediately on God as their object, and include both the devout affections of the heart, and all the natural and external expressions of those affections.—The devout affections from which, as from their natural source, flow all the streams of pious obedience to our Creator in this life, are love, reverence, and resignation. And, of such profound and universal obedience, the active spring is love ; which, to be sincere, ought to be supreme. It is, perhaps, better expressed in the sacred scriptures than in any other writings ; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind*. This affection in the pious mind has respect to all the attributes of the Deity ; but chiefly to his moral perfections, and, especially, to that infinite goodness on which we, and all things do constantly depend.

*Reverence* is less an active, than a restraining principle, and is calculated to impose a salutary check on the passions of mankind, surrounded, and stimulated, as they constantly are, by powerful temptations to vice. This affection respects, principally, the infinite greatness, wisdom, power, and holiness of God. It is a principle essential to the existence of piety and virtue, in creatures so imperfect, and prone to evil as mankind. From the profound degree in which it prevails in the pious mind, and ought ever to prevail in the human soul, it is justly in the sacred scriptures, stiled the

tue was held in peculiar honor in the  
n commonwealth, by that wise peo-  
distinguished writers inform us, that  
of the gods, and reverence for the  
o, as the basis of the public virtue,  
of the republic. How much more  
ould be attached to this principle in  
country !

lect our own duties. It tends to produce that placid serenity of soul, so becoming the character of resigned piety, and to awaken the active and prudent exertions, which virtue requires of every good man, in dependence on God, to improve the felicity of his condition, and his honourable standing in life.

#### OF OUR EXTERNAL DUTIES.

The external duties, which we owe to God, comprise every decent outward expression of the pious sentiments of the heart. They are all embraced under the general name of *divine worship*, for which, however, natural reason has not prescribed any precise and definite form.

Different nations, and different sects of religion, have each adopted a peculiar ceremonial. No sanctity ought to be ascribed to rites, exclusively of the affections which they are designed to assist; or any further than they are proper expressions of the devout dispositions of the soul. But all rites deserve to be regarded with respect, which custom has sanctified by their sacred use, among any people, or so associated with their religious ideas, as to be to *them* the most serious, and affecting expression of their devotional exercises. In considering the general question, of the utility of rites and forms in religion, and how they may be applied in the most effectual manner to answer the design of impressing the heart in divine worship, and aiding its pious emotions, reason

emonial ought to be, neither too simple and splendid. The mass of mankind, by sensible impressions, as select, with proper fervency, a religion intellectual, and scorns any alliance on the other hand, the senses are apt to be too ceremonial too splendid, or multifarious, to exclude the heart and understanding

ship in general, that they ought not, perhaps, to pass without a particular answer.

It is said, in the first place, to convey an unworthy idea of the Supreme Deity, to suppose that he derives pleasure from hearing his perfections repeated, or his praises extolled by mortals, in acts of adoration, as if, by such adulatory addresses, his displeasure could be averted, or his mercy bribed.—It is equally unworthy the Divine Majesty, it is alledged, to believe that humiliating confessions from such imperfect beings can be acceptable to him who already knows and pities all their errors ; or that he can require of them formal acknowledgments for the acts of beneficence, which it is agreeable to his nature to bestow, and for which no acknowledgments can make any requital.

To these unfair representations, it may be replied with justice, that it is an essential law of our nature, that all high sentiments, or strong affections, naturally seek for some means by which to express themselves. If therefore, we feel, as virtuous, and pious men ought to feel, towards the Author of our being, to check this dutiful expression of our emotions, would be to stifle the most reasonable impulses of the heart ; and not to feel them, would be the proof of a cold and corrupted soul.

I add, that the most natural, and laudable affections, when they are suppressed, and entirely locked up within the heart, necessarily languish, and, at length, cease to be perceived. The strong, and ingenuous emotions of unfeigned piety will ever seek for some mode of external expression, and the repeated expression of them in the acts of a visible worship, will reciprocally, give strength to the inward temper from which they flow. An external worship, then, is founded on principles of the soundest reason, and most conformable to the laws of our moral nature. It cannot, by any person, who thinks wisely of the Deity, be supposed to be enjoined for any gratification which he receives from the praises, or prostrations of a being so imperfect as man. It can be demanded only from that infinite wisdom and benevolence which requires our worship for its own essential rectitude, and for its beneficial influence in cultivating the affections and habits of piety, for which it is so admirably fitted. For adoration of the divine perfections, while it impresses the pious mind with an awful reverence of the Deity, tends to elevate the tone of its moral feelings, and to assimilate them to the purity of the object of its worship.—The grateful recollection of the divine mercies, in the immediate presence of God, serves to confirm the affectionate purposes of duty, and obedience to him.—On the contrary, the penitent confession of the sins and errors of life, helps to arm the soul against its own weakness, and its impure passions. And finally, the supplications which we address to the Father of mercies for



the blessings which we need, either for the present life, or in the hope of a future and higher existence, remind us, continually, of our dependence on him for all things ; and awaken, by that remembrance, the profoundest sentiments of piety. Can there be more proper means of cultivating in human nature the best and noblest affections of the heart ?

The second objection, which perhaps, is more plausible, and seems supported on stronger metaphysical ground, is directed against the efficacy, and consequently the utility of prayer, employed as a mean of obtaining the divine favor, either in our public, or private devotions.—The order of the universe, and the eternal train of causes and effects, have, from the beginning, been fixed by infinite wisdom. And the laws which have been established by divine wisdom are as unchangeable as those which have been ascribed to necessity, or fate.—Why, then, it is demanded, should we pray ? If pre-established causes naturally co-operate to the production of the event, it must take place independently of our prayers. If otherwise, we pray in vain. The breath of mortals cannot change the eternal order of things. —This is the objection placed in the strongest point of light. —To obviate it, let it be observed that prayer can have only two ends in view ; either to cultivate the moral qualities of the heart, and thereby obtain those spiritual blessings which, in the order of providence are connected with them, or to procure those external, and temporal goods which we

tain the former, we have seen that  
part of divine worship, possesses  
dged influence. The stress of the  
ses on the latter ; but admits of this  
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f the moral to the physical order of  
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observiency to the former. If this

ter ? And the universal voice of history, has almost raised it into a maxim, that the prosperity of nations is intimately linked with their virtue, and their decline as certainly associated with the corruption of morals, and the disorder of the public manners. When we reflect, therefore, how much public, and individual manners are affected by the healthful state of religion, and how much this is connected with the purity of the public worship, and the sincerity of private devotion, we can hardly avoid the conclusion, that on many events, prayers offered up to Almighty God, with humility, fervency, and perseverance, have an influence, not less powerful, and, often, much more successful than any other second cause. So that whether we regard the wise, and eternal arrangements of providence, or the known and fixed order of natural and moral events, the result still recurs that prayer, far from being an unreasonable, and hopeless service, not only has a natural and important influence on human events, but may have, as revelation assures us it has, a positive and divine efficacy. And, indeed, can any institution be more just, and equitable in itself, than that God should make the conferring of the blessings which we ask in prayer, to depend upon the existence and growth of those pious dispositions which are best cultivated by these devotional exercises ?

## ES TO OUR FELLOW-MEN.

a greater compass and variety than immediately upon God. They represent relations which subsist among man-occupy much the largest portion of one of our actions which does not ions. From the general information

But though so simple in their principles, they are, in practice, almost infinitely diversified in their details, according to the relations which we sustain, to our country,—to our family,—to our vicinity,—to our friends,—to the objects of our charity,—to those who are invested with authority over us,—or who are subjected to our controul,—or, finally, according to our philanthropic relations to mankind. On these duties volumes have been written ; libraries have been filled ; and still they are subjects which constantly demand our attention, and on which we can never cease to be active, and to learn.

#### OF OUR DUTIES TO OURSELVES.

*This class of duties is as real, and, in many respects, as important, as those which we owe to God, or to our neighbour.* On these, as on the last, I shall content myself with simply enumerating the sub-divisions, under which all the particular details may be embraced. They relate to self-preservation,—to self-enjoyment,—to self-interest,—and to the general cultivation and improvement of our nature.

Self-preservation includes the care of health, of liberty, and life. He is culpable who neglects his health, which ought to be diligently preserved only for the useful and virtuous purposes of living. He is, perhaps, more culpable, who barter his liberty for any pretended convenience, or

does not strenuously defend, when it  
ble, and precious prerogative of our  
y to sacrifice life, or unnecessarily to  
is not worthy the rational and moral  
not flow from insanity, is an evidence  
I foolish, and utterly void of virtuous  
ent, in the next place, every good

world, which should be the first concern to every truly wise man in the present.

The general cultivation and improvement of our nature, which I enumerated last among the duties, that we owe to ourselves, has for its objects, our bodily powers, the faculties of the mind, and the affections of the heart. The most important trust, which our Almighty Creator has committed to man as a moral and accountable being, is himself. And the first obligation, which such a gift imposes, is to carry his nature to the ultimate perfection of which it is susceptible, in our circumstances.

Such is a very brief analysis of the general system of our duties, but sufficient, perhaps, to present, to a reflecting mind, a key to its minute and particular details.

I do not say that all men have been able to deduce the system of their duties in a regular and scientific train of reasoning ; nor that they are not much more clearly discerned, under the bright illumination of the gospel, than they were, by the wisest men, under the dim twilight of paganism ; but such they appear to be, when faithfully and dispassionately traced out, under the guidance simply of a purified reason.

**OF NATURAL RELIGION, AS IT RESPECTS, IN THE FOURTH  
PLACE, THE MOTIVES OF DUTY, DRAWN FROM THE  
PROBABLE HOPES OF A FUTURE EXISTENCE.**

After stating the general principles of human duty, as it is prescribed by the religion of nature, it is proper, in the last place, to turn our attention to the motives, from the same source, by which it is enforced. Those drawn from a rational consideration of our interests, pleasure, and happiness, in the present life, will be the same in natural, as in revealed religion. Revelation presents us with the highest possible inducements, which can be derived from the hopes and fears of futurity, exhibited in the clearest and the strongest light. Natural reason, likewise, presents to mankind its motives drawn from the same source, and, though far from being so clear and powerful as those which address us from the revealed word of God, yet well deserving our consideration, as those alone to which the great majority of mankind can have recourse ; and which shew us how far human reason, in its most cultivated state, may lead us, in the investigation of this most important doctrine, unaided by any direct and immediate light from Heaven. For this purpose, I shall propose to you the chief of those general arguments, on which the philosopher professes to found his belief, or rather his hope of the immortality of the soul. The authority of the law of virtue would be very feebly felt by the greater part of mankind,



if the expectations, or the apprehensions of existing after this life, were not shewn to rest on, at least, probable foundations. We must confess, however, that probability is the utmost which reason, paying all due deference to its powers, has been able to attain on this interesting subject. We must look for that clear and full persuasion, on which the soul can repose with assurance in the midst of affliction, and at the approach of death, only in the sacred scriptures. But the human mind, in its anxious longings after immortality, is inclined to make the most of those feeble lights, which reason holds out to encourage its hopes. And Cicero could only say, but he says it with the enthusiasm natural to a virtuous mind, that "if he were deceived in cherishing the hope of an immortal existence, he wished not to be awakened from so agreeable a delusion." And Socrates, in his last conversation with his friends, just before drinking the fatal hemlock, thus took his leave of them,—“You go to your ordinary occupations, I to my fate; which of us shall enjoy the happier lot is known only to the Gods.”

The christian religion has produced such a deep and general persuasion of this doctrine, in the minds of its disciples, as has induced a common belief, that the evidence which reason yields in its support, is much more direct and clear, than, on the most fair and candid examination, it will be found to be. There are, however, such strong and rational probabilities, drawn both from the physical and moral order of

serious attention of the philosopher.  
oral reasons, which claim the assent  
to this truth, I proceed shortly to

n, if the present were the only state  
designs of the Creator, in the forma-  
to be in a great measure frustrated ;  
be conformable to the usual course

their natures are susceptible. Arriving at this, they begin gradually to decay. Other animals increase to a certain degree of strength, and sagacity, which is, evidently, the ultimate limit within which their natures are bounded. Their several species appear to be equal in all ages. There is a point, below which, they hardly ever fall, and above which they cannot rise. Far otherwise is it with man. The greatest portion of his powers would be lost, and he would seem to have been made in vain, if there were not another state of being, in which they may unfold themselves, and attain that perfection of which they are capable. Hardly can we conceive it to be consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God, to bestow on man so many incipient talents, only to be checked, or cut off, in the very commencement of their progress,—germs which are never suffered to come to their maturity. Moral and religious sentiments, in particular, do not seem to have any reasonable object, if we are to regard ourselves, as being only particles of animated dust, destined to perish almost as soon as we begin to exist ; and have not, beyond this life, the hope of some nearer approach to the deity, and the expectation of some reward from him, which shall depend on the purity of our pious affections, and the integrity of our virtuous conduct in this life. The sacrifices of virtue, would be without remuneration ; and the noblest dispositions of the heart, cultivated with the most devout care, would be like incense burnt and scattered by the winds, before a being who regards it not.

Another argument of no inconsiderable weight, in the estimation of the rational philosopher, for the doctrine of immortality, is derived from the general belief of mankind. Such a universal concurrence of opinion, indicates some original principle of nature on which it rests ; and which can be only the operation of God himself in the human heart. It has formed an article of belief in all religions. It has been laid at the foundation of all the political institutions of antiquity, as well as of modern ages. And no nation has been discovered so rude, and savage, who has not, along with the idea of God, united that also, of the future existence of the soul.—Some philosophers ascribe this interesting phenomenon to imitation, and the influence of education. Where principles have already a foundation in nature, education and imitation readily concur to strengthen their influence. But when they are entirely arbitrary, although one principle may take root, and be propagated in one nation, and a different one in another, yet, when have we seen such uniformity in education, among all the inhabitants of the globe, if it has not been employed to cultivate some natural principle ?

It has been boldly asserted, but I conceive with little plausibility, that the doctrine has been introduced, and obtained credit in the world, by the artifice of priests, in order to establish their authority over the multitude, by the all subduing charm of superstition ; or, by the craft of politicians, and legislators, who found no better way to render their sub-

jects obedient, and to confirm the authority of their laws, than by the power of religious fear.—In answer to insinuations of this kind, we may well ask, when had a few priests, or politicians more cunning than all the rest of mankind? But, if it be true, that the order of human society cannot be perfectly maintained without the belief of a state of future retribution, and that, therefore, the whole force of political power and intrigue has been employed to establish this sentiment among the people, this is surely an argument of no inconsiderable weight for the truth of the doctrine. Otherwise, man must have been formed under the hard necessity of being continually deceived, in order to promote his best interests; a consequence which we ought not to impute to the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Creator.

The universality of this belief, therefore, ought, I presume, to be ascribed to an original sentiment of our nature; or, at least, to a conclusion that so necessarily obtrudes itself upon the mind, from the united reflections of reason, and sentiments of conscience, that it may justly be classed along with our instinctive feelings.

It is certainly no proper, or sufficient objection against the universality of this opinion, and consequently, the truth of this principle connected with it, that there have existed philosophers, who have denied it; or whole nations who have blended it with many superstitious notions.—A minute

to plunge too far into the subtleties of which less to be depended on as a guide than the instincts dictates of the uncultivated un-  
surprising, then, if a few philosophers, in the confusion, or the vanity of affected simplicity, or the vanity of affected simplicity, added, to their other contradictions, the denial of a future immortality of the soul.

which are commonly found to increase in proportion as they appear to be approaching the period of their earthly existence. The natural desire of immortality is certainly, one of the strongest affections of the human heart, at least, till the dominion of vicious passions have made it the interest of the guilty to fear it. It is the most powerful motive of virtue, and the greatest consolation of good men, under the various trials of life. And on the violent and criminal passions of the vicious there is hardly any restraint so effectual, as the apprehension of a future existence, and of the retribution with which conscience always accompanies that fear. The hopes and fears of human nature, therefore, both concur to strengthen the probability of a renewed existence after this life. If this lively anticipation of a future being, in a happier state, be implanted in the hearts of good men, by God himself, can we believe that his infinite benignity hath created in them desires only to disappoint them, and inspire them with hopes only to tantalize them?

The same conclusion is confirmed by the apprehensions of wicked men, especially under the stroke of any great calamity, or at the approach of death. The conscience of guilt anticipates a retribution far exceeding any sufferings to which it can be subjected in the present life. And very few are the cases in which this salutary fear can be entirely extinguished by the hardihood of vice, or the perversion of a misguided education. And, certainly, it would not be

serving the interests of society, or of human nature, to attempt to remove from the minds of men, those useful restraints which the wisdom of divine providence hath thought proper to impose upon the passions, which would, otherwise, be dangerous to the peace of society, and to the best interests of virtue.—This argument is not a little strengthened by the acknowledged effect which the disbelief of the immortality of the soul, and the doctrine of a future life would have upon the state of public morals. The good could hardly find in the general order, and distribution of providence, in the present state, sufficient motives to sustain them in the continual conflicts; or to encourage the incessant efforts of virtue, which are often painful and laborious, and not rarely exposed to extraordinary hazards. If the passions of men were freed from the salutary restraints of religious fear, and secrecy were, as it then would be, the effectual protection of crimes, the greatest infelicity and disorder would reign in society. Some of the most eminent of the Roman writers ascribe the extreme corruption of the Roman manners, towards the period of the republic, and under the empire in its first ages, to the introduction and prevalence of the epicurean philosophy, of which the final extinction of the soul at death was one of the leading principles. If these reflections be well founded, and the doctrine of immortality, and religious reverence, which generally accompanies it, be necessary to the peace and order of human society, and the prosperity of nations, the truth of the principle is strongly implied in



this salutary effect. It is unreasonable to believe that God has formed human nature in such a manner as to require that it should be governed by falsehood. We ought to presume, on the contrary, that all the plans of infinite wisdom do so correspond, that virtue, and happiness, which appear to be the end of the whole, must be established by truth alone.

There appears, in the next place, such a promiscuous and unequal distribution of good and evil in the present state, as gives strong ground to expect, in some future period of our existence, a partition of the blessings and inflictions of divine providence more conformable to our ideas of the goodness and equity of the Supreme Ruler of the universe. If this world were designed to exhibit the ultimate plan of his moral government, it would be a most natural expectation to find virtue placed in such favourable circumstances, that tranquillity, comfort, and honor, should, at least, be within the compass of its reasonable efforts ; and vice be subjected to deprivations, and inflictions that should bear some proportion to the disorders and enormities occasioned by it. Contrary, however, to that order of things which all our ideas of reason, and of the goodness and equity of the Deity would suggest, we often behold virtue suffering under deep and unavoidable afflictions ; and those afflictions, not unfrequently, induced immediately by a firm and steady adherence to truth and duty ; while vice triumphs in the rewards of fraud and treachery. Many writers, professing to put external circumstances

n, have maintained, that happiness, the internal state of the mind, is according to the virtue and wisdom. It is to be implied in the objection : it is said, was really no less happy. This vindication of the perceptions of providence, sup- rather plausible than just. A few sm, or philosophic speculation, may

This mixed and unequal distribution of good and evil, is probably better adapted to a state of probation, where virtue is exercised and tried, by being thrown into various circumstances of adversity and prosperity, than one which should indicate a more exact discrimination of character would be. But it is contrary to all our ideas of the divine beneficence and wisdom to believe that these probationary sufferings are to be the final reward of virtue ; or that this mixture of pleasure and pain, in which the pleasure evidently predominates, is to be the final infliction of divine justice on vice which disarranges the whole order and harmony of the moral world.

From these considerations, we have the justest reason to conclude, that *this* mixed condition of human life, and promiscuous distribution of divine providence, indicates, only a preparatory state of moral discipline, which has a reference to another and higher condition of being.—

And this hope we have seen to be confirmed by the analogy of nature, which seems inclined not to leave any of her works imperfect, and will, therefore, not crush in the germ, or arrest in their incipient state, so many noble faculties of the human mind, which are evidently capable of attaining a degree of perfection which they never arrive at, and of evolving powers which they never display in the present life.—We have seen it confirmed by the general suffrage of human nature, resting, it would seem, on an instinct-

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to conclude, that the condition of human life, will be greatly improved above its actual state in the present world, both in personal form, if, according to the ideas of religion, we look for a re-union of the body with the soul, and in the powers of the mind. In those transmutations which pass under our immediate review in the insect tribes, we never see them pass from one state, to resume the same appearance in another, but, in each gradation in their progress, they acquire augmented powers, and are invested with new, and more beautiful forms. It cannot, therefore, be unreasonable to expect a vast augmentation in the active powers of our nature, both corporeal, and mental; in the quickness and vivacity of the senses, in the beauty and excursive force of the imagination, and the penetration and energies of the understanding. And the same analogies incline us to expect the addition or development of many new faculties, of which, in the present state, the imperfection of our reason cannot form any conception.

Nor is it improbable that, in an immortal existence, the renovated faculties of our nature will advance forward in an endless progression of improvements, whether reason incline us more to the idea of one continued but improving form of existence, or to the pythagorean principle of successive transmutations. And in the system of the universe, there is, undoubtedly, an ample theatre for an interminable progress both in knowledge and in virtue. Nor can we doubt but that there, the wisdom, the power, the goodness, and equity of

be more conspicuously, and illustrate the present introductory state of

y unwarranted license to the exclusion of judging only from actual analogies, and reason, may we presume to extend, though most imperfectly, the influence to which virtue ardently as-

**EVIDENCES**  
**OF THE**  
**CHRISTIAN RELIGION.**

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INTRODUCTION. THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION.

**BEFORE** proceeding to the consideration of the *doctrines* of our holy religion, it is necessary in the first place to display its *evidences*, that our faith may not be merely an enthusiastic and visionary confidence, but a rational offering to truth and reason.

And if I should propose little, or even nothing that is *new* on this subject, I hope to be able to comprise the general argument in favor of Christianity, in such a narrow compass, and exhibit it in such an easy and perspicuous order, as not only to afford conviction, but furnish a concise and ready answer to those popular objections which are most frequently urged against the holy scriptures.

But before proceeding directly to exhibit the proofs on which our faith in the christian system may rationally rest, I shall, in the first place, offer to you several considerations which afford a strong presumption of the necessity of some

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if we see evils reigning over the



At the period when Christianity first appeared in the world, the principles even of natural religion had nearly perished from among men. Instead of those pure and sublime conceptions which every reasonable and dependent creature ought to entertain of the supreme and infinite Creator, mankind had degraded the objects of their worship below even the vilest and most profligate of their worshippers. "*The glory of the incorruptible God they had changed into an image made like, not only to corruptible man, but to four-footed beasts and creeping things.*" They deified all the passions, and served them with all the vices. What were Saturn and Moloch, and Venus and Bacchus, but cruelty, and lust, and intemperance personified? And what were their altars, their temples, and their groves, but scenes of the grossest pollution, and often of the most horrid crimes? In many countries, and especially in India, in Egypt, and Syria, they deified the obscenest parts of the human body, and served these detestable idols with a correspondent worship.

The ideas which they framed, and the hopes which they conceived of a future state of existence, were so uncertain and obscure; and were at best, so gloomy and uncomfortable, as to afford little encouragement and support to the heart in those painful self-denials, and those arduous conflicts which it must often undergo in aspiring to an elevated pitch of virtue. As little were they calculated to console it at

which, to them, was the loss of every hope ; and still less to elevate  
 res of sense, and to prepare it here-  
 celestial state of being. Reason, in-  
 novements, however it may accumu-  
 afford no secure expectation, of the

But, in the hand of vice, it is used  
 to destroy this precious hope ; for, im-  
 only to virtue. And when this

mains of an original revelation imparted by God to the father of the human race, and repeated to the second progenitor of mankind after the deluge, and by him communicated to the nations immediately springing from him. For, in proportion as men descended farther from this source, and the traces of this primitive tradition became obscure, and mixed with the errors and fables which time incorporated with it, we find the deepest ignorance and the grossest idolatry prevailing, together with a correspondent corruption of morals, which, in a course of ages, arrived, at length, to bid defiance to all restraint and all decency. The apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans,\* has drawn a dark and melancholy picture of the moral state of the heathen world; and, addressing converted Romans and Greeks, he implicitly appeals for its verification to their own observation and experience. And some, even of their own writers, have given to us the same picture in colours hardly less dark. No where, perhaps, can we find a portrait of the moral state of men given in deeper shades than that which Juvenal has drawn of the manners of Rome in his age. And though some allowance is to be made for the colourings of poetry, and especially of satire; yet satire must be drawn from real life, and present to us a strong resemblance of character, otherwise, it loses all its effect.

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\* Rom. chap. 1. v. 24—31.

haps, if reason, prudently and diligently have produced a reform of this answer without hesitation that this is power. It cannot promulge its *ness and certainty*; and these laws *sanctions*. That it wants *certain-* eternal doubts, disputes, and contralawgivers, the philosophers. It t to those observers of human na-

prehending the one, nor of being rationally governed by the force of the other.

The masters of science among the Greeks, fully persuaded of this truth, never pretended to impart to *the people* any of their moral or theological systems ; believing them incompetent to comprehend their first principles, and still more incapable of pursuing these principles, in a train of regular, but often complicated deductions, to their legitimate conclusions. Hopeless therefore of their reformation, they abandoned them to the powers of superstition, to practise its absurd, and often licentious rites, without attempting to instruct them. This it was that made Socrates say, as Plato has recorded the conversation, " You may resign all hope of reforming the manners of men, unless it please God to send some person to instruct you." And made Plato himself say, " Whatever is set right, in the present ill state of the world, can be done only by the interposition of God."\* These maxims of these great philosophers imply that, though the people may be capable of receiving the most wise and excellent principles of theology, or of morals, from *authority* which is supposed to be divine ; yet, if they were set to work them out by the efforts of their own understanding, or by the aid of merely human teachers, the moral state of the world must be irremediable. Blind and arrogant, or sceptic-

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\* Plato's treatise concerning a republic ; book vi

ers ; dull, and incapable of learning,  
doubts of their masters, must be the

city, felt and acknowledged by the  
en world, of some revelation from  
nd in the knowledge of the truth,  
peration on their hearts and lives.  
of the populace, seem now to be

in the errors, the follies, and corruptions of the philosophers themselves, who cultivated it with the greatest assiduity, and who boasted having carried it to its highest improvement. What do we find among them but eternal doubts and contradictions : opinions ever varying, and settled on no certain basis of truth ; which were, therefore, found utterly incompetent to control the passions, or to regulate the conduct even of the professed disciples of reason ? The lives of the philosophers, with few exceptions, were not less dissolute than those of the people whom they despised. And, on the real nature of religion, and the true principles of duty, the sage, as will be seen hereafter, was scarcely better informed than the peasant.

But, lest these reproaches should seem to be the result merely of the prejudices of religion, let me appeal to Cicero, the greatest of philosophers, as well as of orators, who denounces them in still stronger language : “ Do you think, says he, that these precepts of morality had any influence, except in a very few instances, upon the men who speculated, wrote, and disputed concerning them ? No : who is there of all the philosophers whose mind, life, and manners were conformed to the dictates of right reason ? Which of them ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not merely an occasion of displaying his own ingenuity ? Which of them has conformed himself to his own doctrines, or lived in obedience to his own precepts ? On the contrary,

slaves to the vilest lusts, to pride, similar vices."\*

to those who consider that the extension, which arise from the natural tendency to extend its authority beyond its proper limits, and to dogmatical error in bold and cold indifference of scepticism, in



and refinement, and often such systematic scepticism, that their theological and moral principles, thrown into the general mass of the subtleties of science, about which they were accustomed to dispute, lost all authority over human conduct. In a short period after the introduction of philosophy, the greater part of its professors became both vicious in their lives, and atheistical in their opinions. And these masters of science, instead of proving the reformers of the world, only hastened its corruption; and, by weakening or destroying the ideas of a Supreme Judge, and a future retribution, opened a wider door to the licentious indulgence of all the passions.

PROOF OF AN ORIGINAL REVELATION TO MAN. IMPO-  
TENCE OF REASON. NECESSITY OF A  
NEW REVELATION.

The impotence of reason alone to accomplish the reformation of the world, in the midst of the darkness and corruption into which it was sunk, is manifest from this additional fact, that the longer men relied upon it, and committed themselves to the guidance solely of its lights; that is, the farther we descend in history from the beginning of time, the more absurd do we find the superstitions of the people, the more atheistical and impious the systems of the philosophers, and the more degenerate the morals of both.

, at the coming of Christ, had near-  
the true God, and his worship ; and,  
had kept pace with their religious  
ordinary powers of human reason  
remedy evils so extreme, it seems  
eas of the perfections of God, and  
onable hopes in his wisdom, good-  
at he should interpose, by some ex-

als of the world to a much higher and purer standard. No where do we now behold altars or consecrated groves, reared to such divinities as Moloch or Saturn, as Astarte, or the Cyprian Venus. Every where we find purer and sublimer ideas of the divine nature, and of that worship of the heart which ought to be paid to God. Christianity has extended a salutary influence even among many tribes of the human race who have not yet embraced her holy doctrines, and shed some rays of a divine light into the darkness which still rests upon the pagan nations, which we trust, will gradually increase, till at length the Sun of Righteousness shall illuminate the whole earth.

The insufficiency of reason to correct the moral depravity of the world will appear with irresistible evidence to those who duly consider its defect of *certainty*, its defect of *authority*, and its defect of *motives*. Its defect of *certainty*. Reason can proceed but a small distance with any certainty, in investigating moral and divine truth, beyond those obvious, simple, and almost intuitive dictates of the mind which are common to all mankind. And, in a corrupted state of manners, experience demonstrates that even these plain and natural dictates may easily be brought into doubt by the sophistry of the heart, when they oppose its inclinations and pleasures. But if the principles and laws of duty, and of divine truth, were much more clear and precise than they are, still reason is wanting in the necessary authority to en-

of men, and give them effect in practice in order to overcome the powerful influence which are every moment exerted on a heart already yielding nothing less than the acknowledged will of the Legislator and Judge of the universe. No cavil and doubt, sanctioned by authority, can be opposed, and direct-

is there to indemnify it for its sacrifices? What authority to overawe, and restrain it from yielding to the profitable temptation? No: the awful majesty of God, the apprehensions of his supreme judgment, the eternal retributions of virtue and of vice in a future state of existence, which religion sets before the mind, will ever be found necessary, and are no more than sufficient to combat the corrupt influence of the heart, and of the world. The impotence of reason, therefore, to cure the infinite errors of the human mind, the idolatries, the superstitions, the vices of mankind, appears from every aspect in which the subject presents itself to our view, and justifies the conclusion we have inferred from it: the necessity of a new revelation to restore to the earth the truth which it had lost, and to redeem it from evils which the ordinary powers of human reason had become unable to correct.

This conclusion is justified by another most important and interesting fact. Man is evidently a guilty being: he has violated the moral law of his nature, and incurred the righteous displeasure of his Creator, and the infliction of all the dreadful penalties with which the supreme lawgiver has thought it necessary to guard his law. These penalties, which are not arbitrary in their nature, but are the decrees of infinite wisdom and justice, do not depend merely on *the will* of the legislator, probably they do not depend even on infinite goodness, to inflict or dispense with them at its plea-

ship, the simplicity and excellence of the principle which it lays at the foundation of its moral system,\* its tendency to universal happiness, the grandeur of the prospects which it opens into the eternal world, and the sublime conceptions which it every where imparts of the divine nature.

But the truth of christianity does not rest on the *absolute perfection* of its doctrines, of which the frailty of human reason is very incompetent to judge; nor on our conclusions concerning what ought reasonably to be expected of the infinite benignity and goodness of our heavenly Father, in behalf of his erring and miserable creatures: conclusions in which we often depart widely from the actual rule of the divine government; but it rests on such evidences as every man of a sound mind who honestly applies his understanding to the subject, is capable to judge of; evidences which propose themselves directly to the senses, or arise out of the known and immutable laws of human nature.

Accordingly they may be arranged under two heads: the positive and direct, which are addressed immediately to the senses; and the collateral, or presumptive, which arise out of a just consideration of the laws of human nature relatively to this subject. Of the former kind are miracles and the fulfilment of prophecy. Of the latter, are those conclusions

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\* The love of God and the love of man.

which are justly drawn from the excellence and peculiarity of character of the author of christianity, from the humility of the instruments employed to promulgate the gospel to mankind, compared with the sublimity and perfection of the doctrines which they preached; from its rapid and extensive progress, and the important moral changes which it has produced in the world; and from many other similar facts which cannot be satisfactorily accounted for on the ordinary principles of human nature, or of human action; and which, therefore, imply a divine agency and direction. The former, when fairly attended to, do, in each particular case, carry with them entire conviction of the immediate interposition of God; for none but God can operate a miracle, or foretell with minute accuracy, future and distant events. The latter though, singly taken, they do not amount to absolute proof, yet collectively, produce the highest degree of probability.

By certain writers every pretence to miracles becomes immediately suspected, and is deemed a sufficient reason for not entering farther into an examination of the evidences of revelation. This is, in effect, declaring it to be impossible for God to communicate himself by any revelation of his will to mankind. For if he ever deigns to make such communication, it can only be made immediately by himself, or by inspired men, who speak as the organs of his Holy Spirit. If it be made immediately by himself, either by means of a divine voice from heaven, or by any supernatural im-

pression on the senses, such a revelation must be itself one of the greatest of miracles. If holy men speak as they are inspired by the Holy Ghost, can their testimony be received with a rational faith, unless it be accompanied by such works, or such clear predictions of future events, above the power, and beyond the foresight of man, as will demonstrate that it is God who speaks by them? In no other way can a divine mission be authenticated. I repeat it then, if it is reasonable to expect a revelation from God in any circumstances of the world; if a revelation is not impossible, or in the highest degree, improbable; miracles are not only not incredible, but necessary. No revelation can found any just claim to the belief of mankind, on any other ground in the first instance, than such supernatural and miraculous operations as the power of God only can effect; or such clear predictions, as none but an omniscient spirit, who foresees the end from the beginning, and has laid the whole train of causes and events in the universe, could impart to the human mind. If then, the christian system contains a real communication to mankind from the infinite fountain of truth, it must have been announced under the seal of great and numerous miracles, for prophecy itself is a species of miracle. On the other hand, if we possess satisfactory evidence that such miracles were wrought at the promulgation of the gospel, we ought to entertain no doubt of its being the word of God; since it comes to us vouched by the seal of God. For what is a *miracle*? A proper understanding of this term



should lie at the foundation of our present inquiry. It is such an inversion, or suspension of the ordinary laws of nature as can be reasonably ascribed only to him by whom those laws were originally ordained. And whenever he condescends to work a miracle, the operation of his almighty power must be regarded, by every rational mind, as the sanction and seal of truth.

In exhibiting the direct and positive evidence of christianity, I shall, in the first place, treat of the evidence of miracles; and afterwards of that derived from prophecy.

To the apostles, the miracles of our blessed Lord were immediate objects of sense: to us, they come through the medium of human testimony; but testimony of such a kind, and confirmed by so many, and such extraordinary circumstances accompanying, or following the miracles themselves, and dependent upon them, that no facts, perhaps, in the history of the world have ever descended to posterity vouched by such a weight of moral evidence. They are attested by numerous witnesses of the soundest judgment, and the most unsuspected integrity: by men whose writings evidently demonstrate that they were at the greatest distance from that weakness of mind on the one hand, which would render them liable to be deceived themselves; and, on the other, from that ardent enthusiasm, or that knavery of character, which would incline them to pass a deception upon others for the

to their own visions! by men who  
interest or of honour, and even in  
disgrace and poverty, of arduous and  
continual dangers and persecutions,  
self in the most formidable shapes,  
announce this miraculous history to  
add, whose original prepossessions  
character which their Master assum-  
ed which he taught, and who, after a long

ty of revelation. The objection may be considered in a speculative, and in a practical view. In the former, the sum of it is: that the plans of infinite wisdom are immutable; for otherwise, they would not be perfect. God himself, therefore, cannot change the order of nature, still less can he allow a feeble mortal, for any purposes whatever, to change it, inasmuch as it has been established by his own most perfect wisdom. I answer, that the plans of divine intelligence must be immutable, as long as the reasons on which they were originally arranged remain the same. But if those reasons are changed, may they not induce a proportionable alteration in the order of providence? Inasmuch then, as the existence and the whole system of this world, bear a relation to the moral state of man, if man has criminally changed his original state, and although created in innocence, has fallen into sin, although created immortal has become liable to death, can we pronounce it unworthy the goodness, or the wisdom of God, to afford his creature, humbled and conscious of guilt, the hope of mercy, and to confirm that precious hope by such visible interpositions of divine power as leave the penitent sinner no room to doubt but that it is God himself who is the author of his consolation?

The second view in which this objection has been presented is less speculative. It is the celebrated argument ascribed to the ingenuity of Mr. Hume, although, it is probable of much earlier origin, and which has exercised the talents of

several able and judicious writers to refute its sophistry.\* I think I shall weaken nothing of its force by the following statement ; *All our knowledge of natural things we derive solely from experience. And the only rational ground of our belief of what has ever happened, or what can happen in the world, is our own experience of the regular and constant course of nature. Men may impose upon us by false testimony, or they may be deceived themselves ; but nature never changes. Inasmuch then, as we have had no experience of any miraculous changes in the order of the world, it is unreasonable to believe that any such have ever taken place, whatever may be the number, or the character of the witnesses by whom they have been attested. If the principle of this objection is found to be false, the whole objection must fall to the ground with it. If it will not hold in its application universally to other subjects, it is contrary to all just reasoning to admit its validity only against the miracles of the gospel. Let us then try its application in other cases : let us follow it to its ultimate consequences ; these will be found sufficient to destroy it. It leads to atheism ; acted upon in its full extent it would resist all improvements in science ; it will be found, in opposing the moral to the physical phenomena of nature, to refute itself. At least the*

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\* Particularly Dr. Campbell in his treatise on miracles. Bishop Watson in his third letter to Mr. Gibbon, having introduced the subject, appears to me to have, in a few sentences, effectually overturned the principle on which the whole objection rests.

moral phenomena will conclude as strongly in favour of the miracles of the gospel as the physical, admitting the justness of the principle, would seem to contradict them.

I return back on these ideas. And in the first place, it leads to atheism. For, if our own experience is the sole and exclusive ground of judging of whatever is credible in the physical history of the world, it is unreasonable to believe that *this globe* ever had a beginning, or that it will ever *perish*. It must always have existed, and must always continue to exist in the same state in which we now behold it. There can be no future condition of existence for human nature, no future judgment, no future retribution to the righteous and the wicked. For each of these states implies a condition of things, such as has never come under our observation, or been the subject of our experience. There is, on this supposition, no foundation for religion. The order of the world must be eternal, immutable, necessary; and can have no dependence on a creating and intelligent cause. We must embrace the philosophical absurdity of an eternal succession of mutable and perishing beings; and are driven to the impious alternative of believing that there is no God; or, that the universe itself is God.\*

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\* This tenet of the Aristotelian philosophy has always been regarded by christians as only a modification of atheism.

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*the books of the sacred scriptures.\**  
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ciple in the opinion of every pious

have for repeating these experiments, since his own past experience of the course of nature is the sole criterion of whatever is credible. And whence should the greater portion of mankind derive their knowledge who possess neither the skill, nor the means requisite to make the necessary experiments, if they are not to rely for the truth of new facts in science, and facts the most remote from the analogy of their own experience, upon the testimony of others? Must not the progress of science be arrested almost at its commencement?

Let us take another example in which no experiment can possibly be applied to verify the testimony of the narrators with regard to facts the most certain in nature. The inhabitants of a torrid climate never can have the effects of frost presented to their senses. Congelation is as great a mystery to them, as any mystery or miracle of the christian religion. According to this favourite maxim of infidelity, then, they ought to refuse all credit to the fact: and the king of Siam acted according to the principles of sound wisdom in punishing the Dutch navigator for insulting his understanding by incredible stories, who assured him, that, in Holland, water became so hard during part of the year, that it bore horses and carriages upon its surface. If testimony were, under no circumstances, sufficient to vouch to us facts which not only are not conformable, but which, in many instances, are contrary, to all our past experience, science must be

very narrow sphere. This consequence adverted to by the ingenious author gave its present form to the principle. It was aimed solely against the scriptures. But when we are testing if it is not found to hold universally, the latitude of its terms, it cannot furnish certain conclusions. For, by what



refutes itself. For, if the physical course of nature, on which the argument rests, is found to be stable and uniform, the moral order of things appears to be not less steady and regular. If the former of these facts opposes, upon Mr. Hume's principle, our reception of the miraculous history of the gospel; the latter, upon the same ground, forbids the rejection of that history, if, by rejecting it, we must contradict all the moral phenomena of human nature. Admitting then, what can hardly be denied by the bitterest enemies of christianity, that the apostles and evangelists were men of the soundest understandings,\* and the most upright hearts, it is contrary to all that we know of the motives of human conduct, that, for the sake of propagating a most improbable, and to them, unprofitable imposture, they should voluntarily submit to incessant toils and extreme sufferings; they should abandon all that is usually accounted most dear to the human heart, and march with intrepidity through perpetual persecutions to certain death inflicted in the most excruciating and dreadful forms. Their writings, which are always rational in their doctrines, simple in their style, and calm and judicious in their manner of address, exempt them from every charge of enthusiasm; yet, renouncing all the early prejudices of their nation, in which they had been educated,

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\* The perfection of that system of piety and morals published by these humble fishermen, so far excelling the philosophy of their age, demonstrates that, if they were not inspired from above, they must have possessed a degree of wisdom and understanding far surpassing whatever antiquity has produced beside.

they had originally conceived from Messiah, which might have inflamed minds, do we not see them, for a later every actual evil, and every sin, we should suppose, according to the apostles, that the apostles, who expected the Messiah, could have acted from any other conviction of the miraculous power of Jesus Christ, would we not

scribed to Christ as being conformable, or contrary to our experience, but by the character and competence of the witnesses, together with all the preparatory and attending circumstances of these miracles, and their consequences upon the world, that the question of their truth is to be decided.

**THE CREDIBILITY OF THE WITNESSES OF THE MIRACLES  
AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.**

Let us then enter a little more particularly into the character of the witnesses of the gospel, the circumstances under which its miraculous history was published to the world, and has been transmitted to us, and the wonderful consequences which followed its publication. A brief review of these topics, while it will confirm the answer which has been given to the objection of Mr. Hume, particularly in the last view which we have taken of it, will serve, at the same time, to strengthen our faith in the evangelic history, both by the support which we will find it possesses in the clearest and most unequivocal laws of moral evidence, and by the extraordinary effects which have resulted from it, which plainly required the power of a divine cause to produce them.

As it has been shown that there is no insuperable objection, arising from the nature of miracles, against their existence, when alleged in favour of a divine revelation; and as they have been demonstrated even to be necessary proofs

of a divine mission, if God should ever deign to reveal his will in any extraordinary manner to the world, the credit of the miracles which are said to have been wrought in confirmation of the gospel must depend primarily on the credibility of the witnesses who have attested them. And, when this subject is fairly and candidly examined, not only will these witnesses be found entitled to the highest credit, but their testimony will appear calculated almost irresistibly to command our assent; with so many circumstances of authority and certainty is it attended, which place it far before the evidence by which any other facts in the compass of universal history have been vouched.

The witnesses of extraordinary facts ought to be men of unblemished integrity, and of clear and penetrating discernment; unbiassed by any motives of interest which might be liable to blind them to the truth, or to corrupt the purity of their testimony. And certainly the apostles and evangelists of our blessed Lord have left us, in their writings, their discourses, and their conduct, the most indubitable proofs of the soundest understanding, of the sincerest piety, and the most disinterested devotedness to the best interests of mankind, which would render it impossible, in a long course of intimacy with their Master, to be deceived by any fictitious demonstrations of a divine power, and should free them from every suspicion of fabricating a history to impose upon the world.

and the importance of those holy doctrines which they taught, and those astonishing facts which they published to the universe. And the perfect sincerity and persuasion of men, at once so pious and so wise, who were so capable of discriminating reality from pretence, and who had so many opportunities of intimately observing the works which they attest, afford to the candid and serious inquirer, the most satisfactory grounds of belief.

Let us contemplate the disinterestedness and sufferings of the first ministers of christianity, and witnesses of the miracles of our Saviour. They speak a powerful language to the heart, and leave us no room to question the sincerity and the perfect veracity of these faithful men. It is true that men, impelled by a bold and ardent ambition, or inflamed by the hope of fortune, or of glory, may sometimes endure with fortitude the greatest sufferings, or encounter with firmness the most formidable dangers. But without the prospects of honour or emolument, and in the face of poverty and disgrace, of universal obloquy and hatred, of the fiercest persecutions and the most cruel deaths, voluntarily to undertake to propagate a known and deliberate imposture, merely for the glory of a Master who had already perished by an ignominious death, and from whom, of consequence, no farther expectations could be entertained ; and, with a patience and heroism worthy only of the highest virtue and the noblest ends, to consent to be the ministers of falsehood, deceit and

villany, is contrary to all the known principles of human action, and, in such men as the apostles, is utterly incredible. Jesus Christ promised to his disciples no rewards in the execution of their arduous mission but such as should take place in a future state of existence ; of which they could have no other assurance than his own miracles. If then they made such astonishing sacrifices, as it is known they did make, from no rational motive, with no prospect of recompense, it was a solitary phenomenon, altogether inexplicable on any of the ordinary principles of conduct among men. On the other hand, if they were governed by the hope of future and celestial rewards, their belief of which could rest only on their perfect conviction of the truth of the miracles and resurrection of the Saviour, what stronger evidence could we demand of the reality of these facts ?

Their Master not only promised them no rewards, but forewarned them that they should suffer in his cause every evil that could be inflicted by the hatred, the malice, and the power of men. And they were accordingly exposed to every form of contumely, pain and death. They were loaded with chains, thrust into dungeons, lacerated with scourging, crucified, sawn asunder, clothed with the skins of wild beasts and exposed to be hunted by dogs, burnt at the stake, invested with pitched shirts, to which when fire was applied, they were used as torches in the night to light the barbarous

sports of the populace.\* These terrors were sufficient, one would think, to shake the constancy of integrity itself; but certainly, more than sufficient to appal hypocrisy and falsehood, or even the least doubtfulness of the cause in which they were embarked. But by no fear of suffering, nor by any hope of reprieve could these good men be moved to retract, or to mutilate or disguise, any part of the history of a Master who was dearer to them than their own lives. If they would only have denied the resurrection of Christ, they could have delivered themselves out of the most cruel sufferings, which were often such that we can hardly conceive how human nature could support them. Yet their dying breath, their last accents were still used to confirm their unwavering testimony. And among such numbers, not one was found to falter. What can mark in the minds of men a deeper conviction of truth?

A consideration which gives no small additional weight to the argument is, that all the original prejudices of their education, and of national pride and glory, were strongly op-

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\* A variety of passages in the epistles of the apostles, and in the history of their acts by Saint Luke, give us this representation of their extreme sufferings, which is confirmed by almost all the Roman writers of that period who have come down to us; particularly by Suetonius, Pliny, Juvenal, Martial, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, and Tacitus. "Their sufferings at their execution, says Tacitus, were aggravated by insult and mockery; for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs; some were crucified, and others were wrapt in pitched shirts, and set on fire when the day was closed, that they might serve as lights to illuminate the night."

in which their Master appeared, and they were afterwards constrained to see the whole nation of Israel, expected in a temporal prince, invested with the power who was to restore the kingdom of David's dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth. The apostles and disciples were to arrive at this distinction. When, therefore, they



ment of their minds, before they could give full credit to their own senses. They conversed with him, they touched him, they thrust their hands into his wounded side. They could yield such powerful prejudices, supported by all the strongest passions of human nature, only to the most sensible demonstrations. But when their conviction was once conquered by the illustrious displays of a divine power, and nothing but the most illustrious displays of such a power could have conquered it, in opposition to every interest and every prejudice hitherto cherished by them with the greatest fondness, then they, who had before been so reluctant, so unbelieving, so timid in the cause of a suffering Master, were ready to encounter every form of danger, of suffering, and of death, in proclaiming the resurrection, and the miraculous history of their Lord. Such a revolution in their ideas and their conduct must have proceeded, as they declared it did, only from the irresistible manifestations of a divine power with which he confirmed his doctrine, and demonstrated his title to a spiritual and heavenly kingdom.

It may be said that fortitude and patience in enduring sufferings, is no certain proof of the truth of any system of principles; because an enthusiastic mind may be so wound up, as to dare any danger, or to support any pain, in defence of its favourite opinions. I confess that voluntary suffering in any cause, is not an infallible test of *truth*, but it is a test of *sincerity*. It demonstrates the full persuasion of the soul of

which it suffers. This is all that is  
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mingled itself with their perfect knowledge and belief of the resurrection, and of all the miraculous works of their Saviour, on which their faith of his divine mission, and of the doctrine of salvation which they proclaimed to the world, was founded.

If the preceding reflections are just, the miracles of Christ are confirmed to us by an evidence which ought to command our fullest assent. And if his miracles are established, the divinity of his mission and of his gospel, follows as a necessary consequence.\*

Having then, in the first place, demonstrated this principle, that our experience of the uniformity of nature does not afford any solid objection against miracles performed in a cause worthy of God ; we have seen, in the next place, that if any supernatural event is capable of being confirmed by human testimony, there can exist no reasonable doubt with regard to the reality of the miracles of the gospel. And I must again repeat, that no facts in the compass of universal history have come down to us confirmed by such variety, and such strength of evidence.

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\*Celsus, the most ingenious and perhaps the bitterest enemy of the christians among the philosophers of that age, does not pretend to deny the miracles ascribed to Jesus Christ, but seems disposed to impute them to the powers of magic. The science of modern times will never admit such a solution of miraculous phenomena.

be strengthened when we proceed  
tension of the gospel over the most  
e world, who were, from their pride,  
earning, their civil and religious in-  
their ideas and habits, most hostile  
religion. It will be farther confirm-  
roceed to explain the excellence of  
how how worthy it is of the origin  
far superior its doctrines are to any

the same miraculous powers imparted to them by their Master. And can it reasonably be believed that the story of miracles performed in Judea, a remote and despised corner of the world, should have been received by the greatest as well as the most barbarous nations, in the circumstances in which it was received, and followed by the mighty consequences which actually resulted from it, unless the heralds who published it had been able to confirm their testimony by the most palpable demonstrations of a divine power accompanying their preaching? On no other ground do I think we can propose any rational solution of this great moral phenomenon.

Let us then examine the greatness of the effect, and compare it with the circumstances of the world at that period, and with the apparent impotence of the instruments by which it was produced, and, I doubt not, this conviction will meet us with almost irresistible force.

We learn from the history of the acts of the apostles, which contains, however, but a very brief and partial narration of their transactions, and from various intimations either more direct or incidental, given in the epistles, especially of Saint Paul, that the gospel had spread, within a very few years after the death of the Saviour, to all the regions of the known world, and in every country had made numerous converts. This representation is confirmed by the Roman wri-

leads them to mention the numbers  
 r districts of the empire.\* Tacitus,  
 exercised by Nero upon the Chris-  
 of their having set fire to the city,  
 y were apprehended who *confessed*  
 sect, but, through their means, a  
 wards discovered." This imperial  
 the thirtieth year of the crucifixion;  
 gospel had extended from the ex-

being purchased.\* Justin Martyr, who wrote only a few years after Pliny, declares, "there is not a nation either of Greek, or Barbarian, or any other name, even of those who wander in tribes and live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe in the name of the crucified Jesus." And Tertullian, who flourished half a century later, after appealing to the rulers of the Roman empire for the diffusion of the christian religion at that epoch throughout its immense extent, enumerates many nations beyond its limits, as the Moors, the Getulians, the Sarmatians, the Dacians, the Germans, and the Scythians, who had become converts to the truth. "And, saith he, although we are so great a multitude that, in almost every city, we form *the majority of the inhabitants*, we pass our time modestly and in silence." To these nations St. Jerom adds the Indians, the Persians, the Goths and the Egyptians. But, not to multiply quotations, it is well known that, in less than three centuries, the whole Roman world had become christian.

Having, in this cursory manner, presented to your view the wide and rapid extension of the christian doctrine in the first age, let us, in the next place, compare it with the feeble instruments employed in this great work, and with the difficulties which they had to encounter, and, I persuade myself;

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\* C. Plin. Traj. imp. lib. 10. epist. 37.

to produce an effect altogether out of the ordinary powers of human nature.

In order more clearly to demonstrate the efficacy, and almighty power, in the spirit, of the doctrine of the cross, as well as the grace in proclaiming the glad tidings of the gospel.



with such feeble instruments, and in so short a period of time, did the ascended Saviour, just after he had exhibited before the view of mankind the most discouraging proofs of his own assumed weakness in the death to which he submitted, subdue the world to the obedience of the gospel, overturn the altars and the temples of paganism, banish from their shrines the idols with their priests, change the moral and religious systems of the universe ; in one word, overthrow, and utterly eradicate from the hearts of men, whatever the revolution of ages had rendered most venerable and sacred in their esteem ; whatever had been most firmly incorporated with their interests and their pleasures, or most deeply entrenched among their prejudices. This astonishing revolution, which not all the wisdom of their sages, combined with all the power of their princes, could have effected, was the work of a few Galilean fishermen, aided only by one man of eloquence and cultivated talents. And how was it effected ? By the most improbable of all means : preaching the miraculous history of a crucified man, together with the doctrines of repentance and self-denial so revolting to the corrupted tastes of human nature. May I not, then confidently demand if the rapid extension of the religion of Christ under the agency of such instruments, by the preaching of such doctrines, through countries so various and distant, and so opposite in manners, in language, in political interests, in religious customs and ideas, and in all those distinctive peculiarities which divide and alienate nations from one another.

does not contain, in the greatness and the extraordinary nature of the effect, a demonstration of the reality of the miracles by which it was accomplished? Could obscure and despised strangers have carried the triumphs of the humble cross to the ends of the earth, and fixed the hopes of the world on a dying Saviour, unless they had borne in their hands the credentials of Heaven, and displayed to the senses, and the inmost convictions of mankind, the seal of their heavenly mission in the constant operations of a divine and omnipotent power attending their ministry? Their success could not have flowed from their powers of persuasion, nor the force of their reasonings; for they were not themselves masters of eloquence or of science. But if they had been instructed in all the wisdom of the schools, the sages of the pagan world had long since found that the mass of mankind are incapable of entering into the speculations of philosophy. By philosophic reasoning they had never been able to do any thing effectual for the reformation of the world. The apostles simply propounded the moral maxims, and divine dogmas of their great Teacher, confirming them by the supernatural evidence of the works which he enabled them to perform. Thus their doctrines rested on the same proofs with those principles of natural religion, which the Creator has inscribed with his own hand, and impressed by his own power on the face of nature, I mean the characters which it bears of his omnipotence. No other even plausible account can be given of a phenomenon unpar-

alleled in the annals of the world. For, however reluctant reason may be to admit miracles, no miracle was ever so great as such a revolution would be, effected by twelve illiterate fishermen, without the immediate co-operation and aids of the Holy Spirit.

If we consider the difficulties and the apparently insurmountable obstacles which opposed the success of the apostles, they will furnish strong additional proofs that these humble ministers of the Redeemer must have been endued with miraculous powers.

I will not repeat here those impediments which naturally arose out of the obscurity of their own station; the hatred or contempt with which their nation was viewed; and their utter destitution of all those talents of learning and eloquence which are calculated to command the respect and admiration of the world. Under all these disadvantages, which were more than sufficient to ruin the success of men who were not inspired from Heaven, without patronage, without friends, without respect for their personal attributes, or influence from the character of their nation, were they obliged to pass with the gospel in their hands into the remotest countries, among unknown people, ever prone to receive strangers with jealousy, or to look down upon them with contemptuous disdain. In this case, their contempt of these poor and foreign fishermen would be very greatly increased by their bringing to them what, to their apprehension, would be only

crucified man. And their indignation rose to the highest pitch, when they found the recital of such a story, to abandon their gods, all the principles of their laws of living; and whatever the usage of many ages, had rendered sacred to them with their domestic manners, their laws, and their national customs.

vernment. So that the gospel was obliged to combat, at the same time, with the blind superstition and furious bigotry of the multitude, with the wealth and power of the temples, and with the pride and jealousy of tyrannical rulers armed with the sword, who were afraid of nothing so much as of innovation. We may safely appeal to the common sense of mankind if obstacles like these must not have been utterly insuperable to such men as the apostles, going out to the world solely in their own powers of reasoning and persuasion, without the supernatural aid and the accompanying testimony of the Holy Spirit of Truth.

The natural difficulties of this great undertaking were almost incalculably increased by the fate of their Master, whose miraculous history, whose life, death, and resurrection they were commanded to publish, and in whose name they were commissioned to preach. Crucifixion was the most ignominious punishment among the Romans, reserved only for the most detested criminals. Nothing could shock the ideas of such a people more than to elevate to the rank of a divinity a *crucified man*, the native of a remote, dependent, and despised province, who had suffered like a malefactor and slave for alleged crimes against the dominant state. This circumstance alone was sufficient, according to the common apprehensions of the world, to blast entirely their hopes of success. Of the magnitude of this difficulty we may frame some conception by putting an analogous case.

the lowest extraction, and the obscure-  
had, for imputed treasons, been sus-  
pended in chains; and that his accom-  
plishments, and without character,  
he government by declaring that he  
died, and that they were come in his  
honour to the civil authority, to over-  
throw institutions, and all the objects of wor-

ous and palpable, capable of standing the most rigorous scrutiny of envy, of hatred, of interest, of every wounded prejudice, and of all the ingenuity which a learned and enlightened age could bring to the investigation. Nothing less can account for the vast and surprising effect which the simplicity of the christian doctrine, and of the primitive ministers of christianity, has been seen to produce. As miracles appear to be the only power which could have given such a rapid extension to the religion of Christ, in that enlightened and inquisitive period, throughout such various, proud, and hostile nations; so the rapidity of its extension in the face of infinite difficulties, furnishes one of the most irresistible evidences of the reality of the miracles.

In order to account for the rapid propagation of the christian religion without having recourse to the assistance of miracles, some writers have supposed that the superior reasonableness of the moral system of the gospel above that of any of the popular institutions of paganism facilitated the success of the apostles. For, with all their objections against the mysteries of christianity, they are obliged to acknowledge the excellence of its moral code. On the other hand, I have no hesitancy in pronouncing that merely the reasonableness of a religion, or of any moral system, never procured it, in the first instance, an easy and general reception among the mass of mankind. If it has not been incorporated by education with their earliest habits of thinking, it must claim their

some higher authority than merely  
own reason, in which they can repose  
as all the ancient legislators and re-  
so deeply convinced, that, where  
real miracles on which to establish  
to found those civil institutions by  
reduce a barbarous people to order,  
have recourse to a pretended inter-  
reason alone were a competent in-



of learning, and had begun to be a subject of ridicule to the common people ; and christianity only came in to occupy the room which they had left vacant. A less happy conjecture, perhaps, could hardly have been framed. Incredulity, surely, is not a favourable soil for the reception and growth of a new religion. On the contrary, when men, in the progress of a sceptical philosophy, and of the dissolution of the public morals, come to disbelieve, and hold in contempt the religion in which they have been educated, they are then prone to confound all religions, and, along with their country's gods, to reject, even without examination, every new doctrine which pretends to be derived from heaven.

There are authors who think they have made a shrewd observation on human nature, and the liberal genius of ancient manners, when they ascribe the easy introduction of christianity into the Roman empire, to what has been, quaintly enough, called the *sociable spirit* of paganism.

The Greeks and Romans believing in the existence of local deities who presided over particular districts and regions of the earth, easily granted to foreigners the privilege of introducing their country gods into Athens and Rome, and performing towards them their country's rites, because it was imagined they would not be pleased with any other. It was never intended that these stranger gods should supplant the native deities of Greece and Italy. It was never

could interfere with the other. This, the ground of any favour shown to p was exclusive. It could make no y. The doctrine of Christ, where-rew all the altars and temples of pa-om their shrines all the shameful ob-monstrous worship. This, which is e necessary tendency of the gospel, for its reception in those idolatrous

of that high and commanding eloquence which attracts the admiration of the world. Although inferior in these respects to the nations among whom they travelled preaching the gospel ; and although they derived no influence from the splendour or power of their country, yet every thing yielded before them. How far superior to them in every human advantage are the present missionaries of our holy religion. Do they not possess incomparably higher degrees of science than the people to whom they are sent ? And do they not go under the personage of nations regarded in those distant countries with the greatest veneration for their vast ascendancy over the rest of mankind in arts, and in arms ? But they are comparatively unsuccessful, because they do not carry with them, like the apostles, the ensigns of heaven, that is, *the demonstration of the Spirit in his miraculous power.\**

Experience then, and reason, both concur to demonstrate that, without the co-operation of miracles, the christian doctrine could not have made such rapid and extensive progress, as we have seen it do, through nations so various, so distant, and so opposite in their characters : and this astonishing progress, as has been before asserted, affords a strong confirmation of the reality of the miracles on which Christ founded his claim to be acknowledged as the Son of God, and the

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\* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. For my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

messengers from heaven. *Believe for the works' sake.* Many of the men esteem the argument drawn decisive of the question concerning and the most incredulous must confess a powerful presumption in favour of those that the progress of christianity

**THE PRETENCE OF CREDULITY ALLEGED AGAINST THOSE  
WHO EMBRACED THE GOSPEL. EMBRACED BY  
THE LEARNED AS WELL AS THE VULGAR.  
IMPOSTORS AMONG THE HEATHEN.**

It is often alleged by those who are unfriendly to the christian revelation, that the credulity of mankind, and their love of the marvellous, is sufficient to account for the progress of the gospel, and the general belief of its miracles. "The weakness of illiterate followers, they say, would greedily swallow the pretended wonders of their Master. They could easily raise the wonder-loving spirit of their hearers, who would be ready, without inquiry, either to admit their own pretences to a miraculous power, or to believe the fabled miracles of Christ." By a few such general sneers they save themselves the trouble of examining the evidences of the christian revelation, and cast off from their consciences the irksome authority of the christian law.

It is true the ignorant in all countries are credulous ; and, in consequence of this tendency of mind, they abound in narrations of silly wonders. But is there, therefore, nothing really wonderful in the providence of God over the world, or in the dispensation of his mercy to mankind ? Certainly, every candid reader will confess that the miracles of the gospel ought not to be compared with those ridiculous and local prodigies recited in every district of every country by

re evidently the effect of superstitious and enthusiastic fervor of mind. The writers and apostles exhibit no marks of that kind of powers which would render them susceptible of being deceived and imposed upon by lying wonders, and false prophecies. They do not admit that they were enlightened by such means, in which case no deception could be possible. In their moral system, the sublime and beautiful is superior to the phar-

ical narrations are given with a dignified simplicity, their moral instructions, in a clear and judicious train of reasoning enforced with temperate warmth. We find in them none of those wild fervors, and ridiculous extravagancies which seem inseparable from the spirit of enthusiasm. They exhibit all the proofs, which writing and conduct can manifest, of the most undesigning sincerity ; and speak of the most astonishing displays of divine power in the miracles of their Master, and their own, in a strain of calm and temperate narration which surprises us not less than the actions themselves. They speak like men who were not only *witnesses* of the miracles of Jesus, but were *conscious* of the same powers in themselves, and were *familiar with the works of omnipotence*. Neither enthusiasm, then, which deceives itself, nor imposture, which endeavours to deceive others, nor a weak facility of believing without evidence, can justly be imputed to the apostles. Can we then find a more satisfactory reason of the universal belief of the miracles of the gospel in the credulity of the *world* ?

The populace are prone to listen with a certain idle curiosity, and to circulate with eagerness among themselves marvellous tales when they produce no other effect than agitating, and giving play to their natural love of wonder. But, when they are to affect any great interest ; when the belief of them is conjoined with the sacrifice of their passions, their pleasures, their national customs, their honour,

or their fortune, the case is entirely reversed : then they are received with distrust, and scrutinized with rigour. If, in dark and ignorant ages, the people are disposed to listen to fables which seem to spring out of the genius of their religion, and are intended only to strengthen their favourite superstition, they would not surely lend the same easy faith to prodigies, real or pretended, which should be alleged only to overturn whatever was held most sacred among them. Besides, wherever the gospel came, the native superstitions of the people had pre-occupied their minds. All their credulity was already enlisted in opposition to the doctrine, the history, and the miracles of Christ. And in proportion to their ignorance, was the violence with which they were attached to silly and incongruous fables, which were more adapted to the grossness of their minds than the pure and spiritual theology and morality of the gospel.

But, whatever declamations men may think proper to make on the credulity of the vulgar, the belief of the christian revelation was not confined to this class of society. It early numbered among its disciples magistrates, senators, orators, and philosophers of the highest distinction for learning and eloquence ; men who examined the claims of the religion with the most painful diligence, and the most accurate scrutiny ; men who reluctantly yielded the haughtiness of office, the vanity of national superiority, the pride of talents and of learning, to the force of truth, and the demonstrations



of a divine power accompanying Christ and his apostles. Not to speak of Joseph of Arimathea, one of the sanhedrim of the Jews, on whose history some obscurity rests, it is certain that Dionysius, a member of the celebrated Areopagus of Athens, and Flavius Clemens, a senator of Rome, suffered martyrdom for Christ in the very first age. Arnobius, an early historian of the church, assures us that men of the finest talents and the greatest learning, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, philosophers, abandoning their former opinions, and the systems to which they had been attached by education, and the habits of a philosophical life, now reposed their minds only on the truth of the gospel. The writings, and even the names of great numbers of men of letters have not come down to us. A few only, out of multitudes, who, we are assured, were no way inferior to them, and not inferior to the wisest men of the period in which they lived, have survived to our age.\* And if we were to select a philosopher of that time, most distinguished for the splendour of his talents, the acuteness of his genius, and the vast extent of his erudition, it would be Origen, with

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\* It will be sufficient to name the two Dionysii, one of Athens, the other of Alexandria, Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras, Clemens, Anatolius, without mentioning the crowd of the fathers who, redeemed from paganism and the errors of the heathen philosophy, embraced the doctrine of Christ with zeal as the repose and hope of their souls. Having the strongest motives to examine into the foundations of that new and divine philosophy, their nearness to the events recorded in the sacred history afforded them the amplest means of ascertaining their truth.

whom none of the learned men of his time deserves to be named as a rival.

Is it to be presumed, then, that men of their character, and attainments in science, enjoying, as they did, the means of the most minute and accurate inquiry, would receive on slight evidence, or, indeed, would embrace, without the most rigorous examination, a new religion which overturned, and treated as folly all their ancient principles of philosophy? Is there a shadow of probability that such men would enlist themselves as disciples, and champions of this religion, without the most satisfactory evidence of the divine authority, on which it rested, and the deepest conviction of its infinite importance to mankind, when its first effect was to humble the pride of human science, on which they had promised themselves to build their glory; when instead of being the proud teachers of a proud philosophy, it turned them back to be the self-denied pupils of unlearned Jews, and a crucified Saviour; and above all, when it exposed them to such extreme sufferings as no partial conviction, no doubtful faith, and no hasty and immature opinions, could ever have enabled them to endure? Not credulity, surely, but conviction established upon the most solid basis could have sustained them under the operation of those severe and fiery tests of their faith to which it was constantly subjected. That I may place this point in as strong a light as possible, let me

quote here a passage from the pious and elegant Addison, in which it is presented to us with equal force of thought and beauty of expression: "I cannot help regarding as a standing miracle, says he, that amazing, and supernatural courage, or patience, shown by innumerable multitudes of martyrs in those slow and painful torments that were inflicted on them. I cannot conceive a man placed in the burning chair at Lyons, amid the insults and mockeries of a crowded amphitheatre, and still keeping his seat; or stretched upon a grate of iron over coals of fire, and breathing out his soul among the exquisite sufferings of such a tedious execution, rather than renounce his religion, or blaspheme his Saviour. Such trials seem to me above the strength of human nature, and able to overbear duty, reason, faith, conviction, nay, and the most absolute certainty of a future state. Humanity, unassisted in an extraordinary manner, must have shaken off the present pressure, and delivered itself out of such a dreadful distress by any means which could have been suggested to it. We can easily imagine that many persons, in so good a cause might have laid down their lives at the gibbet, the stake, or the block: but, to expire leisurely among the most exquisite tortures, when they might come out of them even by a mental reservation, or a hypocrisy which was not without the possibility of being followed by repentance and forgiveness, has something in it so far beyond the force and natural strength of mortals, that one cannot but

raculous power to support the suf-  
ould not think with Mr. Addison,  
might be strictly called *miraculous*,  
se pious sufferers, yet must we ad-  
the clearest and strongest convic-  
ospel and its miracles; nothing but  
at Christ alone had *the words of*  
nduced them to expose themselves

such tremendous conflicts, integrity and truth alone can sustain the heart.

One important consideration in the change of those learned men, who embraced christianity in the primitive age, deserves to be particularly remarked: they declare that it was not merely the purity and perfection of the christian faith, which originally produced their conversion from paganism and philosophy, but the miracles which they saw performed by the apostles and apostolic men, which carried with them unequivocal demonstrations of a divine power attending their doctrine, and without which they would probably never have turned their minds to an examination of its excellence.

Some writers have unaccountably pretended that the testimony of the christian fathers to the miracles of the gospel ought not to be regarded as possessing any weight in the scale of evidence by which we estimate its truth, because it is the testimony of friends in favour of their own system. But what made them christians? What created their attachment to the christian doctrine? Was it not the miracles they beheld? They were before ignorant of its true nature; they were hostile to its spirit, to the name of its Author, and to his nation. But they sacrificed their prejudices, but they became disciples of a religion they had hated and despised, and for the profession of it they exposed themselves to the

most terrible deaths. Their conversion, then, is precisely that which gives the greatest force to their testimony.

To support the objection against the reality of miracles, which is founded on the credulity of mankind, we are referred to various impostures which, at different periods, have obtained a temporary credit and success in the world. On a few of those which have been most confidently opposed to the *mighty works* performed by our Saviour and his apostles, I shall, after offering to your consideration two preliminary remarks, make several observations with the view of discriminating them from the real operations of a divine power. The first remark which I offer is, that, if pretences to a peculiar intercourse with Heaven have been attempted to be maintained by the additional pretence to miraculous powers, it is, at least, a proof of the general persuasion of mankind, that miracles form the proper evidence of a divine mission. If, therefore, a real messenger from Heaven should ever appear in the world, it is a most natural and reasonable expectation that he should be invested with an extraordinary control over the common operations of nature as the seal of his prophetic character. But because there have been religious impostors, are there, therefore, no true prophets? Because there are empirics in every liberal profession, are there no certain principles of science? This can be the conclusion only of ignorance or prejudice. Empiricism in

religion, or in art, should not make us deny the existence of truth in both, but only render us more careful and scrupulous in examining the pretensions of those who come to us as instructors in either.

I remark, in the next place, that, between the miracles of the holy scriptures, and those mysterious incantations, and ambiguous wonders, performed by the priests, and magicians of paganism, which certain writers have affected to bring into competition with them, there are strong and marked distinctions which ought to be particularly observed, and which are sufficient to demonstrate the one to be from Heaven, the other to be only the spurious growth of human artifice and corruption.

These pretended prodigies were commonly exhibited in some sequestered place where the operators had the opportunity of preparing whatever means of deception were necessary for imposing on the senses. Often they were exhibited in the recesses of their temples in the midst of glooms rendered awful by superstition, and of fearful images presented to an imagination already almost crazed by terror, which deprived the miserable subject of their art of all power of judging rationally of the scenes before him. Nothing was done openly and in public, and exposed to the fair and dispassionate examination of the senses of all men. Their pro-

digies were works of darkness, secluded from the observation of the world, performed only on rare occasions, and after much artful preparation.\* The miracles of our blessed Saviour, on the other hand, were the ordinary and familiar actions of his life. Nothing, as he says himself, was *done in secret*. But all his wonderful works were performed on such subjects as no slight of hand, no apparatus for deceiving the senses could reach; such as healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, restoring the paralytic to their natural powers, assuaging the winds and the waves, and raising the dead. Their wonders were employed to amuse the popular credulity, and to confirm among the ignorant an old superstition by the strange narrations which the dupes of the imposture afterwards disseminated among the people. They were followed by no other consequence. But the works of Jesus Christ, by powerfully seizing on the human mind, have been followed by the most important revolution which has ever taken place in the moral world.

#### OF SUPPOSITITIOUS SUPERNATURAL POWERS.

The pretended powers which, in various countries, have been exhibited by magicians, and sorcerers, and other men

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\* This was the case in several places in Greece, but particularly in the temple and cave of Trophonius. An interesting account of some of the scenes of imposture exhibited in that celebrated cavern of superstition will be found in the travels of Anacharsis the younger through Greece, by the Abbé Barthélemy, chap. 34th.



of that class, have, by the enemies of the christian revelation, been set in opposition to the miracles of our Saviour, as being entitled to equal authority. By this artifice, placing imposture and truth on the same ground, they endeavour to weaken, and, at length, to destroy the influence of the latter over the human mind. The scriptures, they say, place them on an equal footing, by ascribing the works of both to supernatural causes; or making both equally the effects of some secret art. If they are derived from supernatural influence, by what criterion, let me ask, shall we distinguish the demoniacal from the divine? A just subject of regret it is, that many christian writers have given too much countenance to this species of objection, by attributing to demons, and malignant spirits, occasionally, certain miraculous powers, and the prescient faculty of predicting future events. In order to remove the foundation of this objection in which unbelievers have triumphed, I would lay it down as a maxim necessary, to the support of true religion, that miracles are exclusively reserved to be the proofs of divine revelation, and can never be performed by any but the best of beings, and for the most wise, and beneficent ends. The ascription of supernatural powers over the established order of the universe, to infernal or demoniacal agents is equally contrary to reason, to experience, and to the sacred scriptures, which last, however, have been unhappily misinterpreted to support this dangerous error.

have already treated in another work\*  
to refer the reader who may think t  
ir further investigation. The decision  
appears to me definitive when he thus a  
e of his own divine mission.—*The wor*  
*hath given me to finish, the same wor*  
*ss of me, that the Father hath sent m*  
*cs of my Father, believe me not.*

Suffer me, then, to direct the attention of the reader, in the first place, to that most wonderful prediction concerning the fate and destinies of the nation of Israel, uttered by Moses, their divine legislator, near the close of his life.

THE PROPHECY OF MOSES CONCERNING THE FINAL DESTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH NATION.

At that period when the devout and pious mind often becomes prophetic, the illapse of the divine Spirit on him appears to have been unusually clear and strong. After proposing to this people the highest motives to duty, and multiplying to them the most gracious promises of prosperity if they should continue obedient to the laws which God had given them by him, he carries his view far forward into future ages, and, foreseeing the general defection of the nation from the true spirit of their religion, he denounces the most fearful judgments of heaven upon their disobedience and impiety. And then, tracing their destinies to the end of time, he delineates them with such clearness and circumstantial exactness, that, if we may judge of the future by the past for more than three thousand years, he seems to present a history rather than a prophecy. So terrible are these denunciations that nothing but the strongest sense of duty, and the most submissive obedience to the command of God, could have extorted them from the legislator, and father of his people: and so peculiar are these destinies that nothing but that

infinite prescience, which embraces all things, from the beginning to the end, under one view, could have declared them so many ages before they existed.

The prophecy to which I refer is contained in the twenty eighth and thirtieth chapters of the book of Deuteronomy. I shall recite only such portions of it as are necessary to the object of the present lecture, which is to point out the final extinction of the civil government, and national existence of the Jews; the miseries which accompanied their political death; and their consequent, and continued dispersion among all the nations of the world. "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle that flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young.\* And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons, and of thy daughters in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee; so that the man who is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of the children that he shall leave; so that he shall not give to any of

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\* &c. Ch. 28. v. 52.

them of the flesh of his children which he shall eat ; because he shall have nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young infant, even toward her children which she shall bear : for she shall eat them for want of all things, secretly, in the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.\* And it shall come to pass that ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from one end of the earth, even to the other. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease ; neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest.† And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing, and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul ; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have

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\* Ch. 28. v. 63, &c.

† Ch. 30. v. 1-3.

compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee."

Every thing in this prophecy is astonishing; and if we seriously and attentively consider it in all its parts, it carries with it irrefragable evidence of its having been dictated by the omniscient Spirit of God. The minuteness and accuracy of the detail is hardly exceeded by the history of the events. The events themselves are so singular and unexampled, that a pretended prophet, vending only probable conjectures, or ambiguous oracles, for prophecy, never would have conceived, or ventured to utter them. And if he had been so bold, there are infinite chances against one that words thrown out in random guesses should never coincide with the current of future history. That a nation, in a course of time, should degenerate from her primitive manners, and, at length, be subjugated by some powerful conqueror, is an event so much in the order of nature, that it requires no great portion of political sagacity to predict it in general terms. But who could foresee at so great a distance, that the Jews would perish precisely in such a manner; that their sieges would be so dreadful; that the remnant, who should escape the famine and the sword, should be dispersed through all nations, where, renewing their numbers, they should still continue, a distinct people, and capable, on their repentance, of being again restored to a national

and independent state in their own land ? This is surely the foresight of inspiration.

The people of Israel were under a peculiar providence. While they continued obedient to the law of God given them by Moses, they enjoyed distinguished temporal happiness and prosperity. But their departures from the law of their God, their idolatries, and their general defection to immorality and impiety were always punished with marked and severe chastisements. And it was announced to them that, when these temporary inflictions should fail to produce the effectual correction and reformation of their manners, the judgments of heaven should fall upon them with more dreadful severity ; that, after suffering all the most grievous calamities of war, the miserable remnants of the sword should be exiled from their desolated country, and scattered as vagabonds over the whole earth, being subjected to every privation and indignity, till the appointed period, for the expiation of their sins, should bring them to repentance, and open the way for their restoration to their own land.

Let us now see how literally these denunciations have been verified ; especially, at two great epochas, the Babylonish captivity ; and the destruction of Jerusalem, and dispersion of the Jews, under the Roman emperor Vespasian. In the siege which preceded both the one captivity, and the other, this people suffered almost unheard of calamities. As their

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quence, not so much of unfortunate conflicts in the open field, as of desperate and disastrous sieges, in which the greater portion of the people, being shut up within their walls, suffered whatever famine and civil discord, inflamed by the most furious and fanatical passions, not less than the sword of the enemy, could inflict upon the most miserable of mankind. The history of the miseries which they suffered in the respective sieges is calculated to inspire us with horror, and perfectly accords with the strong painting of the prophecy. Passing over the destruction of their city, and the captivity of their nation by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, I shall only present you with a brief sketch of their last overthrow, the most fearful scene of their calamities, in the famous siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the son, and lieutenant of Vespasian. The materials of this representation I draw entirely from Josephus, himself a Jew, and cotemporary with the transactions which he relates, who could have no motive to exaggerate the madness, and the atrocious passions of his own countrymen.

In the various towns of Judea besieged and taken by the Romans during this desolating and exterminating war, their furious and exasperated soldiers cut off the whole population without respecting either age or sex. They showed themselves, in the words of Moses, to be *a nation of a fierce countenance*, rendered more ferocious by the fury with which they were opposed, *who regarded not the person of*

*the old, nor showed favour to the young.* But it was in the siege of Jerusalem itself that the measure of the calamities of the Jews became full. Pressed from without by all the arts of war, and cut off entirely from supplies of provisions, it was difficult to say whether hunger, or the sword destroyed the greater numbers. Their distresses were doubly aggravated by their own internal dissensions. Divided into most violent factions by ambitious or enthusiastic leaders, they often filled the streets of Jerusalem with mutual slaughter. Often they only suspended their own conflicts for a short season to run to their walls to resist the assaults of the common enemy ; and returned from repulsing them to butcher one another. It seemed as if heaven had smitten the murderers of the Saviour of the world with a desperate phrenzy, and given them up to the dominion of the most diabolical passions. In the midst of all these horrors, famine presents us with a spectacle still more horrible, when we see them, driven by the rage of hunger, with cannibal appetite, to devour one another, and the living feeding on those who had died of disease, or of wounds. Even mothers, quenching all the sentiments of nature, devoured their own children, and grudging to their husbands, and their other children a share in this dreadful repast, they endeavoured, after having satisfied the present cravings of their own hunger, to conceal the remaining fragments from the voracious rapacity of the rest of the family, reserving them as a precious morsel against another time. With what fearful accuracy has the prediction of Moses been

fulfilled ! “ And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons, and thy daughters, in, the siege, and in the straitness wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee ; so that the man who is tender among you and very delicate, \* his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of the children that he shall leave, so that he shall not give to any of them of the flesh of his children which he shall eat. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness, and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young infant, even toward her children that she shall bear ; for she shall eat them for want of all things, secretly, in the siege.”

One example, out of many of the same kind, let me produce to show the frantic despair with which this devoted people hastened their own destruction. After the storming of Jerusalem, a wretched remnant of the citizens sought refuge in the castle of Massada: but being pressed by the Romans, they, at the instigation of one of their leaders, first murdered their wives and children: they then chose by lot

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\* That is, who has been most softly and luxuriously bred, and accustomed to the choicest viands, he shall now be reduced to these wretched and horrible meals. And even of these he shall grudge the smallest share to those who were once most dear to him, when the furious rage of hunger had not perverted all his affections.

all the rest ; after which one of the  
the other nine ; who, when he had  
ice, stabbed himself. In this man-  
ed and sixty persons in this single  
whole war there were destroyed by  
and by their own hands, upwards  
nd persons, besides nearly one hun-  
taken prisoners and sold for slaves.†

So conformable was this disastrous termination of the Jewish state, and destruction of the holy city, to the predictions both of Moses, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *For, then, there shall be great tribulation*, saith Christ, “such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be ; and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.”\*

Let us pursue the prophecy farther: “And it shall come to pass that ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even to the other. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest. Here is a new series of wonders. That a nation should be conquered, that it should be reduced to subjection, that it should be wholly exterminated by some barbarous conqueror, would not be so extraordinary ; because the history of the world affords numerous examples of similar events. But, that a whole people should be *plucked from off their land*, should be dispersed in broken fragments through all the nations of the world, and yet neither be blended with those nations, nor become extinct, is a catastrophe so singular, a state so unprecedented, that a prophet who was not uttering a pre-

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\* Mat. 24, 21, 22. See the prediction of our Saviour beautifully illustrated by bishop Porteus in his lecture upon this chapter.

the divine Spirit, an historian who  
hazarding a conjecture or a random  
have thought of one which no fact in  
ve suggested, which no experience of  
ons ever could have warranted. If, in  
ns of the operations of providence, an  
e of time, might accidentally hit upon  
ent, is it within the compass of possi-

*plagues should be wonderful, even great plagues and of long continuance.†*

A circumstance not a little singular, which has contributed more than all others both to their dispersion, and to the injuries which they have suffered, is that, in almost all countries, they have been denied the privilege of holding landed property. This has induced a necessity, contrary to the original habits of the nation, to turn their attention to commerce, and to the discount, and exchange of money in different forms. Hence has resulted the further necessity of distributing them as traders, and brokers or bankers, into various nations. Their wealth, accumulated by these means, excited both the envy of the people, and the avarice of their rulers, and pointed them out as an easy prey to violent and arbitrary princes, whenever the public coffers were empty. The extreme uncertainty of their state tempted them to demand usurious interest in their contracts for money lending. Hence the public hatred, in every country was inflamed against them, and justified, in the public esteem, the rapacity and violence of the princes who oppressed them. A thousand wicked and malicious tales were fabricated against them. A thousand crimes were imputed to them; and they were often given up to the fanatical rage of the populace. Thus has their character been in a great measure formed by their state, and their persecutions have often sprung

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† *Ib.* v. 59.

This, together with the barbarous and  
barbarous forms of civil government which  
ruined Europe, completed their misery.

In his history, may I not justly demand  
of foreseen national characteristics, and  
in, so singular : circumstances so vari-  
destined to take place in such remote  
God alone ? In order to evade the al-



With equal folly and ignorance it has been alleged that this prediction was composed by Ezra, or some of his countrymen, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity; that it has a relation solely to that event; and that hence alone we must account for the very circumstantial narration of several particulars during the siege, and the exact delineation of the consequent state of the nation.

Men who undertake to write and pronounce upon the subject of religion, without the trouble of candidly inquiring into its truth, seem to think themselves entitled to make, without shame or compunction, the most extravagant and improbable assertions. This allegation is demonstrated to be utterly impossible by reference only to the Samaritan copy of the pentateuch.\* This ancient book, which contains the whole

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\* Ten tribes of the people of Israel withdrew themselves from the government of the house of Solomon under the reign of Rehoboam. In their separation they still professed to adhere to the law of Moses, which had been common to the whole nation. The five books, therefore, which were written by him, and which contained his whole law, they preserved with no less veneration than did the Jews. When the ten tribes were led into captivity by the kings of Babylon, they were replaced by a new and mixed race called Samaritans, from the name of their capital city Samaria. These people, residing in the land of Israel, and mixing with the remnant of its former inhabitants, still received the law of Moses as their civil and religious code; but admitted none of the writings of the Jewish prophets. Perpetual hatreds, and a most hostile spirit, always existed between the revolted tribes first, and afterwards the Samaritans, and the people of the Jews. Both nations preserved the law of Moses with the same sacredness. The language is the same. But the Jewish copy of the law is written in the Chaldee character, which became familiar to the Jews during their captivity at Babylon; the Samaritan is written in the old Hebrew, or Phenecian letter, which was common to the

law of Moses, was continually read in the religious assemblies of that people, so hostile to the Jews, during a period of four hundred years anterior to the capture of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon, and still longer before the age of Ezra, and the copy of the scriptures collected by that eminent scribe. Here, then, is a copy of the Mosaic Law, retained in the hands of rivals and of enemies, which renders it of the more unsuspected credit, that demonstrates the existence of the prophecy several centuries before the era of the Babylonish captivity. But the prophecy contains the evidence within itself that its principal reference is to the Roman conquest, and to the state of the Jews since that period. It is a miracle, then, continually presented to your eyes : it is a prophecy every day fulfilling in your sight after a lapse of more than three thousand years.

#### PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE MESSIAH.

No evidence for the truth of the Christian revelation, derived from the predictions of the holy scriptures, appears to me more clear and strong than that which results from that stream of prophecy concerning a future Messiah ; which,

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whole nation before the captivity. This is that which is called the Samaritan pentateuch. And this old letter, in which the law is preserved by them, is another proof of the antiquity of the Samaritan copy. It is doubtless the letter which Moses himself used, and communicated to the people of Israel. And the Jews changed it, in their copies of the law after the captivity, for the Chaldee, only because the latter, by a long residence in Babylon, had become more familiar to them.

commencing with the earliest periods of time, terminates, at length, in Jesus Christ. We trace it from Adam, in that mystical promise, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, down through the line of patriarchs and prophets to the time of Christ himself, in whom all the prophecies, and types of the ancient dispensations have been completed, and the expectations of the whole world fulfilled. For, it is a circumstance particularly deserving your attention, that there was no civilized nation of antiquity, in which were not found traditions concerning a divine personage who should appear upon earth to teach men the true knowledge of God, their duties, and their hopes, and to restore the reign of righteousness and peace to the world afflicted with miseries and crimes. This was a natural consequence of the piety and prophetic character of the father of the race after the deluge. Instructing his children, who were destined to be the founders of the future nations of the world, in the principles of piety and virtue, he would be especially solicitous to instil into their minds this sublime and blessed hope, which was given by God as the consolation of man in the depth of his affliction after the *fall*. If the mosaic history of the world be true, if Adam, after his fall, received this consolatory promise; and if Noah were a good man, and a prophet ;\*

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\* From the pious and prophetic character ascribed to Noah in the sacred writings, we ought to expect among his near descendants, the founders of the various nations of the world, many good men, well instructed in the principles of religion as far as they were known to him, and in those traditionary predictions which

then ought we to expect to find this original prediction and promise, with more or less clearness, among the traditions of all the primitive nations of mankind ; and, finding it among all nations, as we do, it may justly be considered as an absolute verification of the account of Moses, and of the existence of this prophecy from the beginning ; for we can hardly conceive of any other mode in which it could have been so universally diffused. It received further elucidation and extension, in the progress of time, by succeeding patriarchs and prophets. The knowledge of it became more definite by the dispersion of the Jewish nation, who carried their sacred writings with them in all their wanderings. At length the precise period, at which the Messiah should appear, became fixed and settled in prophecy. And, at the moment that his birth was announced, the world was waiting for the event with anxious and universal expectation. The harmonious

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had been imparted either to himself, or to antecedent patriarchs and prophets. These, of course, would be transmitted to their posterity, and, for several generations, perhaps, in a considerable degree of purity. But, at length, becoming corrupted, and blended with many fables, and having descended so far from their source that their true origin was in a great measure forgotten, or in danger of being so, it is reasonable to believe that some good men, in different nations, in order to prevent them from utterly falling into oblivion ; or some cunning and ambitious men, that they might themselves pass for prophets, or be acknowledged as lawgivers divinely instructed, would commit them to writing, mixing with them other matter connected with civil policy, or religion, and giving them a form according to the genius and views of the authors. Hence, perhaps, the origin of the sibylline verses, or oracles at Rome, and of other similar works to which a sacred veneration was paid in various countries of antiquity. And hence the resemblance of these traditions in many respects to one another, and to the sacred scriptures. It is not improbable that these traditions might have afterwards received greater clearness and precision from the sacred writings, which were dispersed, along with

muse of Virgil has presented to us the character of the expected Prince and Saviour, drawn from tradition, and has exhibited the general hope and solicitude of the nations for his appearance at that time,\* in an exquisite poem, and almost in prophetic numbers.† “The last age, says he, is at length arrived, predicted by the prophetess of Cumæ. The mighty order of ages begins to circle anew. Justice returns to the earth, and the happy reign of Saturn; and from heaven descends a new, and divine offspring. Soon shall the great months begin to revolve; and every vestige of our former crimes shall be effaced: thus shall the earth be redeemed from the distressing causes of perpetual fear. He shall par-

the people of Israel and Judea, after their respective captivities, through all the nations of the East. To the holy records the name of Daniel would naturally give great authority, who, during many years, directed all the principal operations of the vast empires of Babylon, and Persia, which extended over the greater part of the Asiatic continent.

\* The time at which this great poet wrote was but a few years before the birth of Christ.

† *Ultima Cumæi venit jam carminis aetas;  
 Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.  
 Jam redit et Virgo; redeunt Saturnia regna;  
 Jam nova progenies cælo dimittitur alto.*  
 ——— *Incipient magni procedere menses,  
 Te duce, siqua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,  
 Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.  
 Ille deûm vitam accipiet,———  
 Pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.  
 Aggredere O magnos, aderit jam tempus honores,  
 Cara Deûm soboles! magnum Jovis incrementum!*

The whole eclogue is well known to have been intended as a compliment to Pollio's son, but it is equally well known to be borrowed from a prevalent opinion or tradition.

take of the life of gods. And he shall rule the peaceful world with his Father's virtues. The time is now at hand. Enter on thy mighty honours, dear offspring of the gods! O son of supreme Jove!" What a resemblance do we perceive in these strains of the Roman poet, to those of a Hebrew prophet! In the same spirit proceeds the whole of this admirable poem, which might be esteemed an almost literal translation of many of the most beautiful passages in the prophetic Isaiah. And it is, indeed, far from being improbable that Virgil was acquainted with the prophetic scriptures, as they had, long before this period, been translated into the polished and universal language of the Greeks. Thus much, at least, appears to be certain, that an acquaintance with the writings of the Jews, seems to have excited, or renewed the attention of mankind to this great event as being near at hand, a vague expectation of which had been long nourished by the ancient traditions of their respective countries. Suetonius and Tacitus, whose historical accuracy and judgment have placed them in the very first rank of historians, both inform us "that there prevailed over the whole East, an ancient and fixed opinion, that there should, at that time, arise a person out of Judea, who should obtain the dominion of the world."\* The

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\* Neither the Pagans, nor the great body even of the Jewish nation, could easily form just conceptions of the nature of that spiritual kingdom which the Son of God was coming to establish among men; they therefore interpreted the figurative language in which it was described in their traditions, and prophecies, and by their respective poets, of such temporal power, glory, and

say, indeed, that popular flattery, or credulity, applied these traditionary oracles to the Roman emperor Vespasian, who had been raised to the empire by the eastern legions, about the time that he engaged in the Jewish wars. But common sense must convince every thinking man, that expectations so universal, founded on predictions which had been transmitted down through ages, always pointing to the same period, and to a divine personage of the most sublime character, who should appear upon earth for the destruction of vice, and the establishment of righteousness, must have had a different origin from an accidental rumour generated, one knows not how, and passing away with the events of the day ; and a very different object from Vespasian, who had nothing to distinguish him from so many other soldiers of fortune who had been raised from the ranks to the imperial purple.

Recent researches into the history and antiquities of most of the eastern nations, and particularly of Persia, India, and China, have proved that similar traditions, to those which Virgil has shown us to have prevailed in the Roman empire, have existed among them from immemorial time.

In these facts we have an extraordinary moral phenomenon presented to our reflections, which carries in itself no

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empire, as were adapted to the grossness of their imaginations. The imagery, however, which they employed, ought to have led their minds to purer and sublimer views.

small degree of evidence, that the traditions relative to a future divine teacher, and legislator to come into the world were founded in original prophecy; and that all the prophecies of the holy scriptures relating to this object were actual inspirations from Heaven, and had their full completion in our Lord Jesus Christ. For before the birth of Christ all nations had their traditions, and their predictions concerning such a divine messenger as the scriptures have described, and held out to the hopes of mankind, through all the line of their patriarchs and prophets, from the beginning of the world. These prophecies, and these traditions all pointed nearly to the same country, and to the same period. Accordingly at that period, and in that country, when expectation, nursed by the belief of ages, was all alive, arose a man claiming his birth from Heaven, who united in himself all the characters ascribed in ancient prophecy to the future Messiah. He has taught mankind the purest, and sublimest notions of God; he has established among his disciples the most holy and rational worship of the Supreme Being, instead of those groveling and corrupted superstitions which had before enslaved the greater portion of the world; he has proclaimed to the universe the most perfect law of morals; he has brought life and immortality to light, confirming it by his own resurrection, after having submitted to death, as he declared, for the sins of the world; and, certainly, his doctrines have produced the greatest and happiest revolution which has ever taken place in the moral ideas, and the manners of man-



kind. And, since his appearance, we see that those expectations, which before were so ardent and so universal, have every where ceased; for, to believers, they have been completely realized, and, to all others, if Jesus Christ is not the divine messenger and prince who was to come, there is no longer any foundation on which they could be supported. Here then is a mighty stream of prophecy commencing with the history of the world itself, and continued down through successive ages to the era of Christ, which carries in its commencement, its extent, its progress, and its termination, shall I not say, infallible signatures of divine truth. Here we behold an emanation of prophetic light darting its distant rays upon this glorious object from the beginning of time. At first, indeed, it appears faint and feeble like the dawn when it begins to break upon the darkness of the night; but, as the sun of righteousness approaches to his rising, we see it continually becoming more luminous and distinct. At length, we behold this spiritual sun appearing in all his glory in the heavens, and divine truth beaming in its full lustre on the nations.

The holy prophets have not only announced a future Messiah to the world, who should derive his birth immediately from Heaven, but, in the progress of that illumination which gradually arose with increasing brightness upon the ancient church, they were enabled at last to delineate his character, as well as to foretel the time of his appearance upon the

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d to sacrifice his son on Mount Mo-  
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and to mortals, a prince claiming his descent from Heaven, who was to extend the empire of peace, and righteousness over the universe, to compose its disorders, and put an end to its crimes, if the picture were drawn merely from the imagination of the writer, would be invested only with those noble and divine attributes which would become his relation to God. It never would have entered into a reasonable mind, judging on the common principles of human nature, to combine with these celestial properties and powers, poverty and weakness, insult and disgrace, humiliation and suffering. But God, who was preparing, at once, an instructor and a sacrifice, a king and a victim, for a fallen, and redeemed race, and who, for this end, united in the same person the most distant extremes of heavenly glory and of human infirmity, so overruled the minds of the prophets that they have drawn a character which they themselves could not comprehend, or explain; which, left to themselves, they never would have conceived, and which could be understood only by the coming of the great Archetype himself.

Let us contemplate the various, and apparently contradictory lights in which he is represented to us by the spirit of prophecy. *Unto us saith the prophet Isaiah, a child is born; unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. And of the increase of his go-*

*there shall be no end.\** And in other and wonderful book, he is exhibited of humiliation and affliction that it would be the guidance of that divine Spirit which, to conceive how they should be applied. "He is despised," says he, "an man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, hath borne our griefs, and carried our

ers by which he attested his Heavenly mission, and the weakness which subjected him to the power of sinful men ; in his yielding to death in its most ignominious form, and his resurrection and triumph over it ; in his descent from Heaven to invest himself with the infirmities of human nature, and again, in his ascension to his primitive *glory which he had with his Father before the world was*, we see extremes which God only could unite ; we behold a character which the Spirit of God alone could have suggested to the minds of the prophets ; we discern the justification of the prophets, and their truth triumphantly confirmed ; and, in the confirmation of their truth, we see the infallible verification of our holy religion. For the Messiah, as he appears in the strains of the prophets, and Jesus Christ, as he appears in the gospel, are characters so entirely out of nature, so utterly beyond human conception and contrivance, that the correspondence of the prophecy to the history, and of the history, to the prophecy, ought to be regarded as an irrefragable demonstration of the truth of both.

Having pointed out to you the early prophecy of a Messiah in the first promise made to man after his fall ; the gradual and increasing light which was shed on this primary prediction, in the progressive dispensations of divine providence ; the universal expectation which was entertained of the appearance of such a divine personage upon earth, founded probably on an original revelation made to the father of

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Jewish nation, and the Jewish scrip-  
gions of the East.

just before his death, taking, under  
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our Lord Jesus Christ, is not, according to the assertions, or insinuations of many infidels, merely a recent, and convenient adaptation of a dubious term by christian writers to the purposes of their faith. No term has had a more precise, and less doubtful signification given to it by the uniform voice of all antiquity.

The import of this prediction, therefore, is, that the tribe of Judah should preserve a national existence, and continue to exercise the essential powers of civil government, till the advent of that great *deliverer* expected from the beginning of the world. This peculiar distinction of Judah, arising from the possession and exercise of the powers of government, seems indirectly to imply that this prerogative should be lost by the other tribes before the coming of the Messiah. And has not this prophecy, both in its direct, and its implied meaning, been completely fulfilled? All the tribes of Israel except that of Judah had lost their national existence, and even the distinction of their tribes, long before the birth of Christ; having been either blended with the tribe of Judah, or dispersed and lost among the various nations composing the Babylonian empire.\* Judah retained both the

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\* Some colonies of people possessing the law of Moses, and professing to govern themselves by its moral and religious rites and institutions, as far as their present situation will permit, have been discovered in the interior of India, and on the borders of China, who are evidently descendants of the ten tribes who were carried away into captivity by the kings of Babylon, before the destruction of Jerusalem in the reign of Zedekiah, and the captivity of the tribe of Judah.

ver, and the prerogative of interpreting their own law till the advent of the *dynasty* in the reign of Herod, the last of the line of David, the sceptre of Judah, and but a few years after the extinction of the supreme judicial, legislative, and executive authority of the nation; and even of the distinct civil community. For, after the destruction of the Temple of the Jews was for a short time destroyed, the princes, who possessed only the



vernment both civil and religious. But when the Messiah shall have come, the reasons, for which this people, is chosen by God, and separated as a church to himself from all the other nations of the earth, shall cease ; and then shall terminate their national, and typical existence. The spiritual empire of the Redeemer shall, after this period, embrace all nations without distinction, or preference ; and *to him shall the gathering of the people\* be*. With what wonderful exactness, then, have we seen this venerable patriarch and prophet, determine the era of this great event ; trace out the destinies of his several sons, and restrict to Judah, the peculiar benediction of Abraham, which consisted in this promise : *in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*.

About the period of the birth of Christ, the visible decline of the Jewish state, and its rapid tendency to dissolution, indicated, by manifest and unequivocal symptoms, to observing and reflecting minds, the approach of the great era fixed for the coming of the Messiah. Therefore Simeon, and many other pious Jews, were *waiting*, at this time, with anxious expectation, *for the hope of Israel*. But the body of that nation, now become worldly, and sensual in their minds, and ambitious in their views, mistook the true character of their deliverer, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom. They, therefore, did not recognise him when he stood in the

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\* *The people*, in this place, as in numerous other passages of sacred writings, evidently refers to the *gentile nations*.

**midst of them ; but, ungratified in their vain hopes, they put him to death in the rage of disappointment, and thereby accomplished another, and not the least glorious part of the prophecies concerning him. While flattering themselves with the illusion of a martial and victorious prince who should extend the empire of Jerusalem over the whole earth, their impatience of foreign domination daily increased, and precipitated them into disorders and revolts, which only hastened their destruction, and gave them the last fatal proof that the Messiah was already come, and that they had done unto him whatsoever they listed.\***

And now, in the conclusion, let me ask, have we not seen a most extraordinary person appear in Judea according to the predictions of the sacred scriptures? And has he not appeared at the precise time which they had marked out, and when, in consequence, he was expected, not by the Jews only, but by almost all nations? Since his coming, have not expectations, which before were so constant and universal, entirely ceased? Has not the Jewish nation, according to the prophecy, rejected him who came to them as the Messiah? And have not the gentiles gathered themselves under his wings, while the guilty Jews have been exiled from their country and scattered through all nations under heaven? Have we not seen the greatest moral revolution effected by

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\* Mat. 17th, 12th.

his doctrines which has ever taken place in the world ? And are not all these astonishing events evidently connected as of a vast plan which takes its beginning with time itself, which we have seen gradually unfolding in the sacred oracles for a long series of ages, and to the consummation of which, when they ceased to speak, they still continue to conduct us by the *lights* of prophecy ?

What, then, is the conclusion to which candid and impartial reason must lead us from all these premises ? Is it not, that the prophecies have been inspired by God ? that the plan which they develop is the work of God ? and that it has been conducted to its wonderful issue by his own immediate hand ?

I have here presented to you a very partial review of the evidence for our holy religion which may be derived from prophecy. It is an ample field ; I have led you to contemplate only a single angle of it. Yet, I trust, I have opened to you enough to convince every serious and ingenuous mind that is solicitous to obtain full satisfaction on a subject so interesting to the happiness, the duty, and the hopes of man, of the importance of exploring it more extensively. The argument, however, as far as we have pursued it, appears to me satisfactory and conclusive.

PRESUMPTIVE PROOFS OF CHRISTIANITY.  
SIMPLICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

After giving you a concise view of the direct evidence for our holy religion, I proceed to exhibit presumptive considerations which increase in giving strength to the general evidence it is the character,

One of the first of the internal characters of the scriptures which strikes us, is the grandeur both of sentiment and language which pervades the poetic and prophetic parts of them in general, and especially that astonishing sublimity into which they rise whenever they speak of the Deity, who is, indeed, their principle subject. They frequently present to us very noble views of the actions and sentiments of illustrious men, as well as magnificent descriptions of natural scenes; but whenever they speak of the perfection, or the operations of the Supreme Being, as if full of God, they seem rapt above themselves. They break out into strains to which there is no parallel, the enemies of christianity themselves being judges in the productions of ancient or modern genius. This was to be expected of men writing, or speaking under the influence of genuine inspiration; and the existence of the fact, that they have thus spoken and written, affords a presumption, of no inconsiderable force, that they were truly the subjects of that divine inspiration to which they laid claim. Whence, if not from this cause, was it that a few devout men in an obscure nation, and in a remote age, far beyond the birth of arts in Greece or Rome, formed such sublime, or rather, such divine conceptions of Deity, and have conveyed them in such elevated strains as there is nothing to equal in the noblest works of those celebrated nations even in the most refined periods of their improvement. Let me select only one example of the appearance of the Almighty. *Then the earth shook and trembled. He bowed*

*the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. The Lord thundered in the heavens: then were the beds of the ocean laid bare; and the foundations of the world were disclosed.\* But where shall we find an idea so sublime, and expressed in such a noble simplicity of language, as that of the creation, as it is represented by Moses: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth; and God said, let light be, and the light was.†* Perhaps words cannot better express the facility with which omnipotence gave existence to the universe.

Even the name by which the Supreme Being was pleased to reveal himself to Moses, exceeds in grandeur and sublimity whatever the religion or philosophy of paganism ever taught on the subject of God. It comprehends ideas more elevated, and worthy the divine nature than had ever before entered the conception of man. All the pagan nations, even those who had made the greatest advances in science, if they did not adopt an atheistical philosophy, had, too nearly, approximated the divine to the human nature. We find worthy ideas of the Creator only in the sacred scriptures.

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• Psal 18th.

† Gen. 1. 1. This passage has been quoted as a noble example of sublimity and simplicity united, by that illustrious critic Longinus; and the quotation has been repeated after him by almost every critic since his age.

*Jehovah*, which is interpreted *I am*, expresses essential life, eternal existence, universal presence. It implies that all things existing in him, and by him, and depending absolutely on his will for the origin of their being, and their continued existence, are to be regarded as nothing in comparison with him, and that he is all in all. He is the only proper being; the universe is full of him alone; the rest are passing shades. Where, then, among all the nations of the ancient world, except in this circumscribed corner of the earth, favoured with the peculiar illapses of the divine Spirit, to keep alive the perpetual fire of truth, till the rising of the sun of righteousness, do we find such exalted and sublime notions of God? When this is fairly considered, may we not justly say, *favoured with the peculiar illapses of the divine Spirit*, without assuming for granted a principle not yet proved? For whence, but from this source, could arise those transcendent discoveries which illuminated the mind of a Jewish prophet concerning the divine nature? that burst of inspiration, whenever Jehovah is their subject, which so far excels the pretended inspiration of all other poets? On any of the ordinary principles or causes which assist to develop, and bring to perfection the genius of nations, or to promote the progress of science among them, this, surely, was not to have been expected in the nation of Israel. In poetry nothing has ever equalled the strains of the Hebrew prophets.\*

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\* To be convinced of this, the reader of taste need only consult the translation of Isaiah by bishop Lowth, with his critical notes and explanations, and his dissertation on the Hebrew poetry.

From them Milton has assisted the noblest flights of his muse. When they introduce the majesty of God, the pious mind is overwhelmed by the torrent and grandeur of their thoughts, and struggles to expand itself to conceptions which it can never embrace. This is the true effect of the religious sublime. In theology, Plato obtained the title of the sublime philosopher of Greece, only for approaching those ideas of Deity which every where pervade the holy scriptures. And his principles, he confessed he did not draw from the resources of his own mind, or create by the efforts of his own genius, but acquired by travelling and conversing with the priests and literary men in those countries in which the scriptures were best known, and in which were found the purest remains of that original revelation, which I have before proved to have been transmitted by the second father of the race, after the deluge, to those nations in the East that immediately sprang from him.

To those sublime conceptions of the Deity which distinguish the sacred writings we may add the views which present to us of the government of divine providence in every part of nature, from the highest sphere to the atom which seems casually to float ; from an angel to an insect : and if we add the lessons they teach of the creation and dissolution of the world, and of the final judgment and eternal reward and punishment of every kind ; where, besides, in all the



we find ideas so grand, and so worthy of God? We can hardly resist the conclusion, therefore, that they have been inspired by that divine and infinite Spirit whose nature, and whose truth they profess to reveal to men.

It has been made a question whether or not the style of the sacred scriptures be proportionably elevated with the sentiments ; or whether, in the structure and composition of their language, they are supported throughout according to the principles and rules of true taste. Eminent writers have appeared on both sides of this question ; some contending for the affirmative, and endeavouring to maintain their opinion by a minute comparison of the diction of the scriptures with that of the classic writers of Greece and Rome ;\* others asserting that there is no standard of taste which can be fairly applied to the writings of all ages, and of all countries.† Human nature, they say, undergoes very material changes, not only in external form and appearance, but in the faculties of the mind, and the habits of thinking, from climate, from the state of society, from the form of government, from the physical character of the country, from the progress of arts, and from various other causes, which contribute, at the same time, to create a correspondent variety in the ideas of beauty

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\* A remarkable example of this mode of conducting the argument we have in *Michell's Sacred Classics*.

† Of this opinion the celebrated Warburton is the principal defender in his *Divine Legation of Moses*.

and taste which prevail in different nations. Hence, in all ages, a lofty and enigmatical manner of writing has obtained in Asia, which, in Europe, is considered as swollen and bombastic ; and, on the other hand, the correct precision of the Attic style, which is admired in Europe, is regarded in Asia as low and frigid. We are not, therefore, to look, say these critics, for any standard of excellence and perfection in writing, which is invariably to govern the decisions of mankind with regard to the merit of works of genius and taste.

Such contrariety of opinion between men of perhaps nearly equal claims to learning and critical judgment, is one proof, among many others, that the question is not of great importance. The object of divine revelation is to teach men *divine truth*, under the inspiration of the holy Spirit, leaving the expression of it to each writer, according to his own genius and taste, formed and modelled, as it will be in some degree, by the genius and taste of the age in which he lives. If these should not always be exactly conformed to the reigning taste of the period in which we live, this will not form any reasonable objection to the style of the holy scriptures, as not properly expressing the majesty and sublimity which ought to be expected in the word of God.

Every man of true taste feels and acknowledges the sublimity of Shakespeare's genius, although we perceive in his strains many harsh and unharmonious numbers, and some de-

partures from the rigorous exactness of critical rules. These are in some instances to be ascribed to the character of the age in which he lived. But frequently the noble flights of his muse bear him above all rule, and give him a complete empire over the mind, and over the critic's art. So the sublimity of inspiration may sometimes disdain to be measured by the little niceties of artificial rules. But I make no apology for the prophets. Elevated and transported with the grandeur of their subject, whenever they speak of God, or his works, or rapt with the fervor of their own devout feelings beyond the ordinary limits of human nature, they always express themselves nobly, and often with a transcendent glow and majesty of diction.

But in treating of the sublimity of the holy scriptures, and applying to them the rules of a just criticism, it is necessary to use the same fairness and candor in judging of them, as of all other works of genius. The design of the writer should be kept in view as well as the nature of his subject, that we may not look for the high ornaments of style in simple chronicles, nor for the sublime of poetry or eloquence in didactic precepts. Every part even of holy writ is not to be judged by the same rule.

Besides, as inspiration was designed only, or principally, to discover *truth*, but does not seem in any other way to have controlled the faculties of the human mind, except by the ar-

dor with which it seized them and the strong impressions which it made upon them, a variety of style is to be expected among the sacred writers, arising from diversity of natural talents, and acquired improvements, or from the manners and genius of the respective ages in which they lived.

In estimating the true character of the scripture style we ought to be able to have recourse to the original. Great allowances ought to be made for the imperfections of a literal translation in prose, such as ours is, of compositions, many of them written in the highest spirit of poetry. Take the finest passages of the most admired classics of Greece or Rome, and render them in a translation equally simple and literal; take, for example, the translation of Virgil by Watson, and compare it with our English version of the scriptures, and you must be forcibly struck with the superior majesty of the prophets and psalmists of Israel, above that of the prince of Roman poets, when exhibited before you in the same dress. The scriptures of the Old Testament, then, read with these views, and under these precautions, will, I doubt not, fully support their claim to a divine original, not only by the sublimity of their sentiments, but by the nobleness of their diction.

The New Testament, indeed, is written with the utmost simplicity of the narrative and epistolary style; but it contains the sublimest system of theology and of morals ever of-

ferred to the faith, or the reason of mankind. Here we behold the threefold existence of the Deity without destroying the perfect simplicity of the divine essence. Here we behold the astonishing assumption of the human nature into an intimate union with the divine. Here all the types and ceremonies of the ancient dispensation are seen to terminate in the Messiah ; all its altars are extinguished, and their innumerable victims are comprised, and forever end, in one divine oblation for the sins of the whole world. Here we are taught to look forward to the dissolution of the universe, and the resurrection of the dead ; and all nations of men from the beginning to the end of time are presented to our view assembled before the tribunal of God. Here are decided the eternal destinies of men and angels. And after the great catastrophe of nature, we are taught to expect new heavens and a new earth, with the introduction of a new and everlasting order of ages. Whether the truth of christianity be admitted to be demonstrated or not, surely infidelity itself must be constrained to confess, that these are the most grand and sublime ideas which have ever entered the human mind. And most worthy they appear to be of that infinite wisdom, and holiness, and benignity, and power, to which they are ascribed.

**OF THE MORALITY, AND EFFICACY OF THE SCRIPTURES  
AS A PRINCIPLE OF VIRTUE AND A HOLY LIFE. OF  
ITS PRINCIPLE, ITS EXTENT, AND ITS AIDS.**

The purity and excellence of the moral doctrines of the holy scriptures, and especially of those immediately taught by our Saviour himself, and the blessed apostles, afford a presumptive argument, of no inconsiderable weight, for their divine authority. The principles of morals, and the rules of virtue, have always been subjects of the most diligent and curious inquiry among the sages of the ancient world, ever since civil society was first established under the influence of regular laws, or philosophy began to be cultivated. But no where else do we find such a pure, and excellent, and perfect system of morals as in the sacred writings. And this has been acknowledged by many of the most ingenious and candid enemies of the christian religion, while they ascribe it, however, to a cause which we can by no means admit ; the natural progress of science, and the gradual advances which have been made in the improvement of the human mind, by adding the experience of following ages, to the wisdom of the past. No such superior improvements in moral science were found, at the commencement of the christian era, in the doctrines of the schools ;\* and it is inconceivable

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\* Of this every classic reader may easily be convinced by consulting Cicero de *natura deorum*.

that they should have first taken their origin among the fishermen and mechanics of Judea. The argument would have had more plausibility applied to the learned men of modern ages, if we had not the most certain evidence that the superiority of their moral and theological doctrines to those of the ancient schools, ought to be ascribed solely to the illumination shed by the scriptures on the christian world.\*

True it is, that any pretence to revelation must come recommended by some general system of good morals, otherwise it will soon fall to the ground. But when an impostor has set up a fictitious claim to inspiration, we may ever expect to find some traits of human weakness and depravity mingled with his religious doctrines. It is almost impossible that an impious, or immoral man should not transfuse, in some degree, the colour of his own character into his work. Hence, amidst the general precepts of justice, temperance, and chastity, without which civil society cannot exist, and which enter into all the religions of the world, still we find, in the temples of paganism, free permission given to the indulgence of the most licentious passions of the heart. It is in the koran itself, in the vicious licence which it grants its disciples, and the sensual paradise which it confers on its military saints, that we might learn the lust, and violence of

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† Whatever is excellent in the theological and moral principles of the koran of Mahomet we have likewise reason to believe was drawn from the knowledge which that impostor had both of the writings of the Old and the New Testament.

not acquainted with the history of his scriptures, you not only discern a morals, many excellent precepts of you have presented to you a perfect in the most faithful and candid scrutiny an opposite character or tendency. the principles and examples of the removed from the injudicious fer- the cold and burdensome ceremonial



It has been justly remarked by Dr. Paley, after the celebrated Soame Jennyns, that the spirit of the morality taught by our blessed Saviour is entirely opposed to those splendid and ostentatious qualities which too generally pass in the world for virtues of a superior order, and which history so often ambitiously displays to decorate her style, and to captivate the unthinking admiration of mankind for her principal heroes. The gospel gives no praise to that pride which exalts itself over our fellow men, and is easily provoked at injuries real or imaginary; it has no indulgence for that jealous honour which is ever ready to suspect, and revenge insults, or that lofty ambition of power and command, which the mistake of the world is apt to extol as a proof of elevation and nobleness of mind. On the other hand, next to the love and fear of God, it bestows all its approbation on meekness of spirit, on candor, on humility, on charity and kindness of heart, in a word, on those mild, innocent, unassuming, and benevolent dispositions, which give birth to the sweetest intercourse among mankind, and form the strongest and happiest cement of society. This is a morality entirely different in its genius from that which would be dictated by the spirit of the world. It is peculiar to the gospel. And although, at the first view, it may seem, to those who have received their education in the world, to be tame and pusillanimous, it will be found, on a fair and just examination, to discover a more profound estimate of moral worth than was ever before

made; either in the school of philosophy, or in that of the world.

It is judiciously observed by both the distinguished writers to whom I have referred, that the heroic virtues, as they are called, are calculated only to disturb the peace and happiness of human society, and have, indeed, been the chief sources of the disorders, the wars, and revolutions which, in every period of time, have afflicted all nations. On the contrary, if all men were governed by the christian virtues of humility, of meekness, of candor, of forgiveness, of charity, the earth, which has, hitherto, been the theatre of violent, conflicting, and cruel passions, would become the residence of tranquillity and peace.

Do you ask if the general prevalence of these meek and pacific principles in a nation would not expose it to insults and injustice from its powerful neighbours, and render it, at length, an easy prey to their ambition? I answer that the maxims of the gospel do not oppose the natural duties which every citizen owes to his country for its defence. It is among the primary obligations which the gospel imposes on its disciples, *to honour and obey the magistrate*, as well as *to fear God*. And the supreme magistracy of a state owes duties to the nation under its protection very different from those which subsist between man and man in society. It is the latter, chiefly, which the evangelic rules of meekness,

humility, charity, and forgiveness are intended to regulate. And they promote peace and union by cultivating the spirit of mutual love ; they prevent discords, by extinguishing, or correcting the passions which are the principles of contention and division. The civil laws of most countries aim at the same end ; but feebly, because they impose their restraints only on the outward actions ; whereas the gospel enters into the heart to correct the evil in its source. It is folly therefore to accuse of tameness and pusillanimity that spirit which, by changing the dispositions of the heart, promotes the peace of society in the most perfect manner ; an object which it is the supreme end of a wise legislation even imperfectly to attain, by operating with its compulsory power on the external conduct. It is the error of the world to bestow its admiration on that bold and ardent character of mind which is quick in its sensibilities to injury, violent in its resentments, jealous of its honour, proud of its darings, and ever ready, in order to avenge itself of real or imaginary wrongs, to break through both the prescriptions of law, and the dictates of justice. Such is commonly the heroic character whose achievements blazon the pages of history. Far different are the virtues of the gospel. Silent, yielding, and benevolent, they contribute to promote and secure the happiness of mankind, which the former tend to destroy.

When we consider, then, the perfect and unmixed purity of the morality of the gospel, and the indications which it

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 the principle from which it springs,

The summary of duty, in the next place laid down in the holy scriptures, as comprehending the whole spirit and substance of the morality of the gospel, serves to demonstrate its excellence and perfection.

All our duties may be divided into two great classes : those which we owe immediately to God : those which terminate directly on our fellow men. And of both these classes our blessed Saviour has, after Moses, who received it from God himself to be prefixed to the tables of the ten commandments, given the most admirable and perfect epitome : *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ; this is the first and great commandment ; and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.\** By this concise view of the great and commanding principles of morals, we see that the gospel, which places the restraint of all vicious and sinful actions in a renewed heart, the only efficient point in which it can be fixed, places there also the true spring of all duty. And, is it not evident that the worship of God *in spirit and in truth*, veneration for his holy name, resignation to the dispositions of his providence, and universal obedience to whatever bears the stamp of his authority, will flow from supreme love to him as from its native fountain ? And, on the other hand, is it not equally evident that justice, bene-

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\* Mat. 22d, 37th, 40th.

ty, meekness, forgiveness, and all the multiplied relations which we will be the natural and necessary consequences of undissembled love ? But do you ask, peculiar to the gospel ? If we do not find it in the moralists of heathen antiquity, we find it in the moralists of the present day. We find it in the gods frequently recommended by the philosophers ; but in none of their

sages of paganism, as that which has been laid in the gospel of Christ; and never has such a moral superstructure been reared on any basis; so admirable, for its purity, for its simplicity, for its adaptation to every grade of human understanding, for its fulness, and its application to every case which can arise to a fair and candid mind in the conduct of life. If, then, these principles, and this system which appear so perfect, would have been wonderful, proceeding from the genius and the pen of a Plato, or a Marcus Antoninus; if, indeed, we see nothing parallel in the schools of Greece or Rome; how much more wonderful are they if we consider them merely as the productions of unlettered peasants belonging to a country which Greek and Roman pride regarded as barbarian?

Having been nursed and educated amidst that light which the gospel diffuses wherever it is received, we are apt to regard its moral doctrines as containing only the simple and obvious dictates of natural reason; because they have entered into our earliest education, they have mingled with our first ideas, and been incorporated from infancy with all our habits of thinking. But to be justly impressed with the full force of the claim which it possesses to a divine original, we should return back to the periods which preceded the christian era, and to those countries which did not enjoy the light of revelation, and see what the wisdom of the wisest men has discovered upon the subject of duty and morals. This will af-

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which precepts the evident import is, that we ought to offer our devotions to our heavenly Father, not as a mere form, not through ostentation, but purely for the love of God ; and that we should fulfil every office of benevolence and charity to our fellow men simply from the love of doing good. No regard merely to our own credit and reputation among men, and no considerations of honour or interest arising from the publicity of our good deeds, ought exclusively to influence us in their performance : they ought ever to be the natural and spontaneous effusions of the pious and virtuous dispositions of the heart.

Many very amiable and benevolent persons have greatly mistaken the meaning of these precepts, as if they implied that the chief merit of charitable deeds consists in their being entirely withdrawn from the knowledge and observation of the world. So far is this from being true that, not unfrequently, their publicity may form part of their good desert, by the encouragement which it will afford to the alms of others. It is not the mode of doing a benevolent action that our Saviour designed to regulate, but the principles from which it should spring. In this view, what an amiable proof do these precepts contain of the excellence of the evangelic doctrine, and the celestial purity of its spirit !

Another character of the sacred scriptures which has generally been relied on as affording a presumptive indication of

God is their simplicity and plainness, unity of the subjects of which they are the system of truth and morals which religion, which comes from God, must be adapted for the instruction of the people. It was the glory of *the gospel*, in its *first preaching to the poor*. In ful-  
filling the necessary end of popular edification, they have been more preposterous than

were to enter with him into such disquisitions on the principles of these doctrines as were common in their schools ; if they were to endeavour to trace them to their primary elements, and again to pursue them through regular deductions to their ultimate conclusions, guarding against objections and doubts at every step, and parrying, or solving a thousand knotty questions in their progress, would not this plain man be confounded ? He would be lost in the intricacy of their speculations, and would not be able at last to recognise his own principles. Such reflections add no small value to the plainness of the gospel ; and may, perhaps, justly be said to afford a presumption of the divinity of that system which has thus been able to bring down the sublimest subjects to the level of ordinary minds.

I subjoin here, that *the efficacy* of the holy scriptures, by which is meant their tendency, and powerful influence to produce holiness of life in those who truly believe them, is often adduced by pious writers as an internal character, and presumptive argument of their divine original. This argument is supported partly from reason and partly from experience. In the former view, we should consider the motives and assistances of duty afforded by the gospel, and the awful and commanding authority by which it is enjoined. The motives presented to the view, and urged upon the conscience of a believer in the gospel, are of so transcendent and interesting a nature, as evidently to give it an operation, and ef-

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and control which come home to every thought and purpose of the soul. Before the majesty of his authority, the turbulence of appetite, and the deceitfulness of the heart are overawed, and brought to submission. And the authority of God is exhibited in the gospel as possessing claims to our obedience, and a power to command it, which reason alone cannot exert. He enforces his law by all the rights of creation; by all the obligations of his love in the redemption of the world; and by all the terrors of his justice, which shall, at last, decide, by this law, the eternal destinies of mankind.

Among the most effectual means of holiness, pious writers have ever considered the promised aids of the holy Spirit: they are, therefore, to be classed under that head of presumptive proof of which I am now treating: *the efficacy of the scriptures.*

To a nature corrupted as ours is, the difficulty of conquering its sinful tendencies and habits, and turning its whole force and activity into an habitual love of virtue, of holiness, and of God, that is, of regenerating and new creating it, might justly be regarded as insuperable without supernatural, and divine assistance. At least, convinced sinners who feel only the difficulties of religion, and who, in repeated efforts perfectly to obey the law of God, and to overcome the power of sin in their hearts, must be sensible only of their own weakness, would be ready to sink into despondency, or re-

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suation to his heart. The argument, however, which I take to be in its nature very solid and just, is calculated, and intended rather for the confirmation of the faith of the believer, than the conviction of the unbeliever.

OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES WITH THEMSELVES, AND WITH THE STATE OF THE WORLD.

Another internal character of the sacred scriptures, which affords a presumptive argument of their truth, is their *consistency*. This may be considered under two views : their consistency with themselves, and their consistency with the state of the world.

That any work, the production of one author, and embracing a code of legislation, or system of morals, how extensive soever, founded on his peculiar opinions, should be regularly deduced from definite principles, should aim at one end, and be found coherent in all its parts, would have in it nothing surprising. It would be a natural consequence of genius, and sound judgment in the writer. But, in the scriptures we perceive, not the work of one author, nor of one age, but the gradual development of a grand scheme of providence, and of divine grace towards mankind, commencing with the origin, and carried on through the whole series of time, till the close of the canon of the New Testament, in the accomplishment and illustration of which an immense number of persons

must have co-operated throughout successive ages, not connected with one another, and not acting, as far as appears human view, under any common direction. One dispensation follows and is built upon another. The same spirit, the same principles of theology, of piety, and morals pervade the whole ; the same spiritual promises and hopes are gradually unfolded through thousands of years, and conducted to the ultimate accomplishment. Here is a vast concatenation of events intimately linked together, and depending upon one another ; here is a unity of plan in this great system continued down through different dispensations of the mercy of God to the world, tending to fulfil one great design, the salvation of mankind through a Redeemer ; of the astonishing development of which design, continued through such a long period, no reasonable account can be given, unless we suppose the whole to be under the immediate guidance and direction of heaven. Plans laid by human contrivance are not so permanent, and, if I may use the term, so continuous. There is no example, in human affairs, of successive generations taking up one design, unfolding it by degrees in a long course of ages, and carrying it, at length, to its ultimate completion. From the character and state of human nature, its limited and discordant views, this is perhaps impossible. We cannot perceive the various schools of philosophy concurring in the same systems of physics, or of morals. One learner of a sect differs from another ; the disciple differs from his master ; the principles on which their respective theories are



built are continually changing. But in the holy scriptures we find one uniform consistent design pursued from generation to generation. Amidst all the variations which in a long succession of ages must have occurred in the state of society, in the manners of men, in their habits of thinking, and in the external forms and usages of the church itself, we still perceive the same doctrines concerning the nature of God, and the duties of man; we still discern the same principles of morals, the same worship of the heart required in true religion, the same high and eternal motives of duty urged upon the conscience, the same promised Saviour exhibited to our faith, the same plan of divine grace, distinguished only by the additional lights from time to time thrown upon it as it approached its final accomplishment. In this consistency, then, we behold a moral phenomenon so different from whatever takes place, in the plans and designs of men, as to afford no slight presumption that the whole, from its commencement to its consummation, has been under the wise and gracious direction of the Spirit of God. The same Spirit seems to have inspired the holy patriarchs, the great legislator of Israel, the long succession of the Hebrew prophets, and the evangelists and apostles of our blessed Lord.

There is another light in which the consistency of the scriptures may be considered, which merits a more extended illustration: it is their conformity with the actual state of the world. Truth is always consistent with itself, and with all

ough it may be disguised, and to su-  
y seem to bear a semblance of truth ;  
of moral, historical, and natural sci-  
the holy scriptures, it is extremely  
true of falsehood and imposture, fab-  
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the actual system, moral or physi-  
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s of science. But improvements in

**THE CHARACTER OF THE AUTHOR OF OUR RELIGION: THE  
INSTRUMENTS HE EMPLOYED TO PROMOTE IT: THE  
BENEFICIAL CONSEQUENCES WHICH HAVE RE-  
SULTED FROM ITS PUBLICATION AND  
RECEPTION IN THE WORLD.**

Among the presumptive evidences of the truth of the Christian religion, none, perhaps, are stronger than that which arises from the character of its blessed Author. No other man has ever existed, who, in his intercourse with the world, was so blameless, so amiable, and, in every attribute which deserves the esteem of mankind, so worthy our veneration and love. Such a character would very ill accord with the duplicity and hypocrisy of imposture. As the union of the divine with the human nature in the person of the Redeemer is a doctrine purely of revelation, we are not at liberty, while only establishing the proofs of the gospel, to assume that principle in order to exalt the virtues and perfections of Jesus Christ. We must consider him merely as he appeared to the view of men, claiming to be the founder of a new religion derived immediately from God, that we may judge how far his character corresponded with his high pretensions, and how far these pretensions were supported by such eminent virtues, and such freedom from error and imperfection in conduct, as ought to be expected in a messenger of heaven, the example and instructor of mankind. That he appeared, in

after their long and intimate inter-  
eir daily observation of his life and  
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og declaration of Saint John : *And*  
*h, and dwelt among us ; and we be-*  
*as of the only begotten of the Father,*

\* This whole passage, I presume,  
ation, nor to any of those sources

only aggravated by the ingenuity and malice of wicked men, you perceive no other emotions but those of compassion, and forgiveness to his enemies, but the most perfect meekness, submission, and resignation to the will of God. Often you see him retire apart from the admiration, or the curiosity of the multitude, and the company of his disciples, for the purposes of secret devotion, and, on the sabbath day, he is careful to exhibit an instructive example of devout attendance on the public institutions of religion in the assemblies of the synagogue. Ever warm, humble, and affectionate in his devotional exercises, you perceive in them, however, nothing of those ecstasies, nor of those bold familiarities with heaven, which distinguish the spirit of enthusiasm. And in that model of prayer which he gave his disciples, which, for comprehension of thought, for a just selection of the objects of prayer, and for the true spirit of devotion has never been equalled, you find the genuine fervors of piety united with the most calm, dignified, and rational expression of the devout feelings of the heart.

When we descend to that part of his character, which was exhibited in his intercourse with mankind, it is, in the highest degree amiable and interesting, and worthy our admiration and imitation. The spirit of meekness and humility breathed through his whole life and manners ; and his benevolence and charity knew no bounds. Always engaged in instructing the ignorant and comforting the afflicted, you

behold him continually surrounded with multitudes of poor, of maimed, of blind, of diseased, listening to his instructions and consolations, and seeking relief from that benevolent power which he was ever ready to exercise in their behalf. His love of sincerity and truth would never suffer him to disguise his designs, even when he knew that his enemies were only waiting for his declaration to wreak upon him their most cruel and murderous rage. Yet, it was in the midst of the sufferings inflicted by their cruelty and rage that the united virtues of his character shone with the brightest lustre ; submission to the will of God ; zeal for the happiness and salvation of mankind, the great object for which he laboured upon earth ; the unruffled meekness of his nature under the injuries and indignities of his persecutors ; compassion and forgiveness towards his enemies in the midst of the tortures which he endured from their hands ; the dutiful affection and care of a son towards a destitute and afflicted mother standing at the foot of his cross, which no bodily torment could suspend in his heart for a moment ; the whole crowned by that last fervent act of benevolence and devotion, in which he expired : *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* How unlike an impostor ! How far superior to the life, and the death of heroes, or philosophers ! Rousseau in one of those moments of warm and generous admiration of virtue which he sometimes felt, comparing the death of Jesus Christ with that of Socrates, gives to the founder of christianity an infinite preference to the Athenian sage.

This character of Jesus Christ, indeed, is drawn from the memoirs of his life written by disciples, who may be supposed to have coloured it with a pencil tinged by their partiality for a beloved master. But let it be remembered that the gospels, were evidently not written with any direct view of making the *eulogy* of Christ, but merely to present to us a narrative of his actions and discourses, which is done with the most undesigning simplicity. The character we derive from the facts as they have presented them.

To draw a uniform, consistent, and noble character, from imagination, which shall be entirely new in its principal features, is one of the most difficult works of genius, and not to be expected from men in that sphere of life in which the disciples moved. But it is still more difficult to invent a consistent, yet diversified series of actions from which the character, strongly and distinctly marked, shall naturally arise to the view of the reader. Besides, we have four separate memoirs, evidently written without any concert of their authors, which still, however, present to us the same picture of life and manners.\* A biographical picture, thus

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\* *Written without any concert of their authors* ; for although they present to us nearly the same transactions, and discourses, yet it is not done with that identity either in the substance of the narration, or the order of time which would indicate preconcert, or design. On the other hand, we perceive such differences as would naturally occur in the narratives of intelligent and honest men giving, after a certain interval of time, the history of the same events, without any knowledge of each other's testimony, or any study to make them accord ; and yet with

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his chosen people, and impatient of the yoke which had lately been imposed upon them by the Romans, expected in their Messiah a martial prince and a conqueror, who should deliver them from the power of their enemies, and enable them to conquer in their turn. In such a state of the public sentiment and feeling, impatient, agitated, anxious, momentarily waiting for the appearance of some great deliverer, many daring spirits would naturally arise to offer themselves as leaders in the honourable and popular enterprise of rescuing the nation from its abject humiliation, and raising it to that splendor and glory so eagerly anticipated by every Jew. Minds of a fanatical and enthusiastic turn, inflamed to a degree of insanity by sympathy with the general fervor, would imagine *themselves* to be the instruments destined by heaven to accomplish this glorious purpose. Whereas others, of a cold impiety, but of a bold and resolute temper, calculating on the possibility of turning the national ardor to their own aggrandizement, would cherish the daring ambition of usurping the government by force of arms, and placing themselves on the throne of Judea. But, whether actuated by a spirit of fanaticism, or imposture, and under one or other of these classes all pretenders must be ranged, they would equally move under the impulse of the public sentiment, and be directed by it in their choice of the means to accomplish their end. They would, therefore, always appear at the head of armed bands. And such was the fact, according to the testimony of the cotemporary historian Josephus. For, of all

the numerous impostors, who sprung up in Judea pretending to be Messiah, a little before the ministry of our Saviour, and, from that period, till the final destruction of Jerusalem, there was not one who did not attempt to support his claim by arms. Not so the Lord Jesus Christ. He deviated entirely from this course, which nature and human policy would have pointed out to him, and chose one in every respect opposite. The vain and proud expectations of the Jews he refused to gratify. He openly declared that his kingdom is not of this world. Instead of affecting the splendor of royalty, or the authority of command, he renounced all worldly pomp and grandeur. Instead of the weapons of force and compulsion, he employed only the meekness of instruction and persuasion. Instead of conciliating the favour of the Jewish nation by courting their prejudices, he boldly and openly declared to them that their national policy, and even their national existence as the peculiar people of God, should soon come to a period. He did not allure his disciples to his party by the prospects of honour, emolument, or command, but by inculcating humility and selfdenial, and proposing to them, in his service, only arduous trials, incessant persecutions, and unrewarded labours. This is a course which not only nature, and human wisdom would not have pointed out, in the circumstances in which he chose it, but which judging on all the acknowledged principles of probability, could only have tended to ruin his hopes. The humble, peaceful, patient, and selfdenied character which he as-

sumed, so widely different from that to which the spirit of that age and nation would have urged him, affords ample proof that he was not governed by any maxims of worldly policy. And his success, notwithstanding the entire defect of all the measures, or precautions which human wisdom would have prescribed, and in opposition to the contempt, the indignation, and power of a whole nation, whose wounded pride, and disappointed hopes, had inflamed their passions to a degree of fury which threatened to crush him, and all his designs in an instant, supplies the strongest presumption that *the work was not of men but of God*, who, with a silent, but irresistible operation, often confounds the counsels of the wise, and defeats the power of the mighty, and conducts the designs of his own providence, by secret, and inscrutable springs, to the most wonderful and unexpected issues.

Conformable to the character which the Saviour assumed were the instruments which he employed to propagate his religion. He chose men from the humblest walks of life, without power, without influence, without science, without eloquence ; and yet, strictly forbidding every attempt to extend his doctrines by compulsion and force, he commanded them to rely for success in their mission simply on their plain unvarnished exposition of the truth, under the guidance of that divine Spirit which he promised them to co-operate with their preaching. What could be expected, on every ground of human calculation, from the choice of such instruments for

a work of this peculiar nature, and of such infinite magnitude and difficulty, but failure and disgrace? Could men in their rank of life, and possessing only their talents, have raised their minds to such a mighty enterprise as that of changing the moral state of the whole world? If they had been bold enough to admit the thought, was there any example in the history of human events which could have encouraged the smallest hope of success? Yet, we have seen them, in obedience to the command of their master, although with reluctance at first, under the consciousness of their own impotence, enter on this astonishing enterprise; and we have seen it, contrary to every principle of probable reasoning, gloriously accomplished in their hands. Well may we ask, then, if the choice of such instruments is not a new proof that our blessed Saviour did not take counsel of human wisdom, nor act on any plan that the cunning spirit of imposture would have dictated? And, when we contemplate the wonderful revolution which they have effected, does not the conclusion, almost irresistibly, force itself upon the mind, that they must have acted under a divine direction?

But, omitting all other arguments of the presumptive class, I shall only further offer to your consideration that strong presumption which arises from the effects which the christian religion has had on the interests, and happiness, the religious opinions, morals and manners of society. That the publication of the gospel has produced an important revolution in

the moral and religious state of the world, is obvious to all who have sufficient acquaintance with the history of nations, and of human nature, to be able to compare the past with the present: and that this revolution has, upon the whole, been salutary, and has contributed, in no small degree, to the happiness of mankind, can hardly be denied by any well informed, and candid unbeliever.

The beneficial effects of the christian revelation may be considered under two views: the great and visible improvement of the world in religious and divine knowledge in consequence of the prevalence of christianity; and the practical improvement, especially of the christian nations, in morals and manners.

Much has been said already, on the great superiority of the theological and moral system of the sacred scriptures, above all that philosophy ever taught among the disciples of human wisdom, or superstition ever substituted for religion among the vulgar. But the beneficial influence of the gospel is not to be looked for chiefly among men of science, who form but a small portion of any nation, nor to be measured principally by the excellence of its doctrines compared with the institutions of philosophy, but by the illumination which it has shed through the great mass of the people. In this class, who were once thought to be incapable of any rational consideration of those sublime subjects, do we not now find

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teemed requisite even to the sacerdotal character. How different are those pious offices which are performed in our christian temples! What a school are they become to the people of that knowledge most important to the interests and happiness of mankind! With what advantages in the church, that is, under the immediate inspection and authority of Almighty God, are they initiated in that most perfect discipline which embraces the whole compass of their duties to God and man, and provides most certainly for the happiness both of their present, and their future being! Idolatry, with its impious and immoral train, has been banished from all its ancient seats in the civilized world. For christianity has in this, and in many other respects, extended a salutary influence far beyond the nations embraced within its actual pale.

If christianity has introduced into the great mass of society a more perfect knowledge than they enjoyed before, of those moral and divine principles most useful and important to the practical understanding and discharge of all their duties, it has, in the same proportion, opened the true sources of enjoyment to all who sincerely embrace and believe its doctrines. Their happy influence will be perceived by a good man in every situation wherein he can be placed, in the composure of his spirit, in the sense of the continual presence, favour, and protection of Almighty God, in that filial affection and trust with which he confides in the divine mercy, and that security with which the spirit of faith reposes on

the true foundation of our eternal hopes. But the gracious and beneficent power of the gospel, and the preciousness of its consolations, will be peculiarly felt under the various afflictions which God hath found it necessary or useful to introduce into the discipline of our present state of probation. There are comforts in religion which can enable the pious heart to throw off the pressure of all its sorrows. But, that I may not enter too far into disquisitions which would better become the pulpit, I will confine myself briefly to point out the consolation and support it affords the soul at the approach of death. The weakness of human nature, if it is not supported by religious hope, commonly meets this awful term of our earthly existence with extreme solicitude. And the consciousness of guilt, which is apt to be awakened in the heart when we are approaching the presence of the Supreme Judge, and when all the illusions of the passions, and the world, which had diverted reflection, are passed away, greatly aggravates to most men the distress of dying. Their utter ignorance of all that is beyond this life, and the fearful apprehensions natural to weakness and guilt, of what may take place hereafter, must often agitate with terror, or hang with peculiar heaviness, on the departing spirit which is not enlightened by revelation. The polite and learned nations of antiquity, although they had some notions of the existence of the soul after the dissolution of the body, and some apprehensions of a future retribution to virtue, and to vice, yet had framed no clear and satisfactory ideas on these subjects on



which reason could rely: all their representations of the state of departed souls, therefore, were melancholy and gloomy in the extreme. What ineffable consolation, then, has the gospel brought to countless millions of the human race? What comfort has it shed upon the hour of death? what illumination on the darkness of the tomb, by *bringing life and immortality to light!* It has pointed out, through Jesus Christ, the way, at once, to a happy death, and to the certain hope of a blessed and eternal existence. To the real christian, who believes its promises, and confides in its hopes, the comforts which it sheds on this most interesting crisis of our being are beyond every estimate which can be formed of their value, and must greatly strengthen in his heart that faith which has been created and nourished there by its holy doctrines.

Suffer me now to conclude these evidences with an observation which is of great importance in order to a just view of the influence of the christian system on the general happiness of the world. Although the knowledge of its divine truths has not been actually communicated to all nations; yet it teaches us to believe that the whole human race do, in a very great degree, participate in its blessings. From the moment of the fall of our original parent, and the merciful promise of that heavenly seed who, from the beginning was destined to repair the evils of his transgression, the world has been placed under an administration of grace *in the hands of the Media-*

tor, suited to its degenerate condition. And now, in consequence of the atonement made by *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, and of the assistance of the holy Spirit, which through *the one oblation offered on the cross*, has been imparted to all men to direct and strengthen the dictates of conscience in their breasts, salvation has been rendered possible to sincere repentance, and regeneration of heart in every age, and in every nation, even where the name of Jesus Christ has not been explicitly revealed.\* For the holy apostle Peter hath taught us, what a heavenly vision revealed to him : that, through the death and mediation of the ever blessed Saviour, *in every nation, he that feareth God,*

\* The pious men in the patriarchal ages, and generally in the ancient world, could have had no definite, and evangelical apprehensions of the character of the Saviour, notwithstanding it was through the efficacy of his atonement that they had access to God, and by his Spirit they were sanctified. The same Spirit is imparted, in a degree, to the heathen world, in every age, who, applying with a divine efficacy the law of nature to the consciences of men, becomes, to many among them, a principle of sincere repentance and regeneration of heart.

The Rev. Mr. Brainerd in the journal of his mission among the Indians, relates a striking anecdote, very much to the present point, of an aged man whom he met with, who, in his original state of heathenism, had gained, from his own reflections, and the exercises of his own heart, under the influence of that divine Spirit which he acknowledged, an acquaintance with the most important practical principles of real piety, as far, probably, as, without the explicit knowledge of the Mediator, and the atonement, they were generally attained even by the best men in the ancient and patriarchal world. Mr. Brainerd, after free and repeated conversations with him on the most practical subjects of religion, declares that if he thought it possible for a heathen to be a truly pious man, without the direct knowledge of Jesus Christ, he would have concluded this Indian to be such. In this remark, indeed, we perceive a certain illiberality of opinion, which, considering the powerful effect, on many minds, of the prejudices of education, is, perhaps, rather to be lamented than severely censured. This pious missionary forgot the reasoning of saint Paul in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans.

*and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* This is the foundation of our hope with regard to the pious men of the ancient world : and on the same grounds may we still build a reasonable hope, that those distant corners of the earth, which seem covered with the profoundest darkness, preserve, at all times, many of the chosen vessels of mercy. And, although the sun of righteousness has not yet lifted his beams on all nations, we have reason to believe that he is in his glorious progress ; and that as the plans of divine providence are hastening to their full development, the gospel will shortly be extended along with the improvements of civilization and science, over the whole earth, and involve all na-

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Will it be asked, what advantages then, if the principle which has been stated above be just, have the christian nations over those who enjoy only the faint glimmerings of the light of nature ? I answer, that, although men, who enjoy only the imperfect lights of nature, together with those gleams of original truth which have been preserved by a tradition that is not yet entirely extinct among any people, may, through repentance and sanctification of the Spirit, be saved by a Redeemer whom they have not distinctly known, yet must they be subject, through life, to many, and distressing doubts and anxieties which the native weakness of human reason is unable to resolve. Beside, the nations who enjoy the blessed light of the gospel possess much clearer and more ample means of knowledge and of grace, more efficient motives of duty, more consoling hopes, than those who are left to the obscure teachings of reason unenlightened by revelation. And, if such means and motives have in their own nature, and independently on the more abundant influences of the divine Spirit, which accompany them under the christian dispensation, a powerful tendency to promote the spirit, and to advance the interests of piety and virtue, how greatly must the numbers of pious men be multiplied under the full illumination of the Sun of righteousness ?

To these reflections it may be added, that if higher degrees of purity, and sanctity of heart and life be the natural result of the clearer lights, and nobler privileges of the gospel, a principle most reasonable in itself, will it not follow likewise, that proportionably richer and more glorious rewards shall crown the obedience of the sincere christian in the everlasting presence of his Redeemer ?

his rays. When this blessed era find an abundant compensation for the feeble dawn, which has so long waited only in the superior duration, but at that period, when, to use the beautiful words of the prophet, *the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be as the light of seven days.*

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**OF THE PRINCIPLES**

**OF**

**REVEALED RELIGION.**

**1st. OF THE HOLY TRINITY.**

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# THE TRINITY,

OR

## THREEFOLD EXISTENCE OF THE DEITY.

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IN entering on the investigation of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, the first object which meets our attention is the Trinity, or Threefold Existence of the Deity.

The existence of God is equally the foundation of natural and of revealed Religion. But in the sacred scriptures it assumes an aspect new and peculiar. The Holy Spirit has revealed in them a modification of the divine essence unknown to the lights of nature. Its unity indeed, is not impaired; but we are taught to believe in the coexistence of three infinite, eternal and equal natures or persons in one most holy and undivided Godhead. As this is a doctrine entirely beyond the discoveries of human reason, it is our duty to receive it simply as a revealed *fact*, without attempting too curiously to pry into the inscrutable mode of this divine union, which, must transcend the comprehension of our minds. Perhaps, however, it is not farther beyond our intellectual capacities to form distinct conceptions of a Trinity in union, than it is clearly to conceive of God himself as pre-

natural religion. Each of his periods is filled with impenetrable difficulties, and, in places, apparent contradictions. There are three infinite subsistences, or persons, of divine worship ; and all included in one eternal essence, only sustaining different names. This doctrine justly excites the wonder and the imbecility of our minds.



most the thinking mind in the contemplation of innumerable subjects in nature. We see the fact, but we cannot understand the manner of its existence, nor free it from inexplicable difficulties which equally embarrass the wise, and the ignorant. Who can explain the ubiquity of God, without extension, or division of parts? Who can reconcile his immutability, and the steadfastness of nature with the promises of his protection to good men? Or who render free from the most embarrassing perplexities two of the most evident truths, the perfect liberty of human action, and the infallible foreknowledge, and preordination of events, the one, the most obvious dictate of experience, the other, among the most certain principles of science? In any revelation from God concerning himself, have we not the justest grounds to expect many discoveries which would otherwise, have far transcended the discoveries, and perhaps, the distinct conceptions of our reason. We must judge with infinite imperfection, or absurdity of the divine nature, if we receive no revelation concerning it but what we can measure by the feeble powers of the human intellect.—On such transcendent subjects when convinced that God has spoken, it is the first duty of a christian to receive implicitly the declarations of his holy word, without any attempt to bring them down to the level of our own minds.

It is a natural inquiry, which has been often made, whence can arise any moral benefit from the revelation of a Trin-

ity, when it is confessed that human reason is incapable of conceiving the mode of the divine existence? I answer that the utility of this revelation is precisely similar to that which is derived from the knowledge of the being of God. The belief presents to our ideas a Legislator and a Judge, an object of worship and of holy fear, a law of duty, and the most powerful sanction of that law. For although we cannot distinctly conceive of the divine nature, nor expand the mind to the comprehension of infinite perfection; yet as far as is competent to all the purposes of piety and virtue, we are able to understand the relations of his justice, his power, his wisdom, and his goodness to us as moral beings. In like manner, although the threefold existence of the Deity is most mysterious and inscrutable, yet the belief of this doctrine as it is revealed offers God to the understanding and the heart, in the threefold relation of our Creator, our Saviour, and the Illuminator and sanctifier of our nature;—in one word as the Moral Governor of the world in reference to our redemption. These relations can be clearly understood by man and are infinitely important to him, as an offending creature to be known. In them lies all his consolation, and the foundation of his hope for eternal life.

**VESTIGES OF THIS DOCTRINE HANDED DOWN BY  
TRADITION AMONG ALL THE CIVILIZED  
NATIONS OF ANTIQUITY.**

When God had formed the father of our race with rational and moral powers which fitted him to be the instructor and governor of the world, it is a reasonable presumption that he should, at the same time impart such a knowledge of himself as should be requisite to the discharge of every duty which he owed to Heaven. And certain it is, that, as a pious parent, he would affectionately and zealously communicate the precious treasure to his immediate offspring. For the same reason, information so important to religion, and to society, would be disseminated by the great ancestor of mankind after the deluge among the various nations springing from him, the knowledge, indeed, communicated by tradition, however important it may be to human happiness or duty, loses, in the lapse of time, much of its precision and accuracy, and becomes mixed with fable. Yet in the multiplied changes of mankind, if the principle, which has just been stated, be well founded, we may expect to find many traces of a doctrine so intimately blended with the first principles of piety ; especially in those countries whose moral history reaches nearest to the era of the deluge.—And we do accordingly discern, in the records of ancient learning, vestiges of this doctrine which are surprisingly clear, and more uniform among people so remotely

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were three Gods praised by the Pythagoreans. And one\* of the philosophers of this school denominates the second of these deities "the Heavenly and Sensible God."—The Trinity of Plato is still better known, the different persons of which he stiled "τὸ Ἄγαθον or *Hen Nous* or *Logos* and *He Psuche* or *Heros*, interpreted, the Good or the one—the Mind or Reason, and the Soul or Love.

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From the philosopher, already quoted, we learn that the traditions of the ancient Egyptians acknowledge Emeph as the author of truth, and creator of the world; but before Emeph they place the first Intelligent, and Intelligible Being, who can be adored only in silence, denominated Eikton; but after both is Ptha, or that Spirit which animates all things by its vivifying flame. Eusebius remarks that the hieroglyphic of the Deity in that nation was a winged globe, with a serpent emerging from its orb. Of which symbol Sanchoniatho, in the fragments preserved by that author, gives the following explanation;—"The globe signifies the first, self-existent Being, without beginning, and without end;—The serpent is the emblem of divine wisdom and creative power; and the wings, of that active spirit which animates the universe." In corroboration of this tradition, it was the received interpretation of their priests that the triangular obelisks erected at the entrance of all their temples were symbols of the divine nature.

Passing to other nations, Plutarch has preserved a tradition of the Persian theology, that their supreme Deity Oromasdes thrice augmented himself; and he records a celebrated festival of the Magian priests in honor of the three-fold Mythras; the names of whom were Oromasdes, Mythras, and Mythra. Since the presidency of Sir William Jones in India the existence of a supreme Trinity in the Mythology of the Bramins is plainly discerned in the midst of their innumerable Gods, and symbols, the belief of which has been preserved among them from the most remote antiquity. And the European missionaries to China have discovered visible traces of the same doctrine existing among that ancient people.—Such a striking coincidence in this important principle of religion among various nations, so remotely situated from each other certainly points to some common origin which can hardly be presumed to be any other than that which has already been suggested.

An objection has been raised against this presumptive evidence, as it may be called in favour of the doctrine, and not without much appearance of plausibility, arising from the supposed silence of the scripture of the Old Testament. This silence however is more apparent than real, as will easily be discerned by the attentive reader, in the revelations made to the ancient patriarchs. That celebrated and ingenious critic who has been already quoted more than once but who perhaps has pushed this opinion beyond the truth of

fact, thinks he discovers the different persons of the adorable Trinity as distinctly designated in the writings of Moses as in those of the apostles. Of the living and true God this great legislator of Israel speaks under the peculiar appellation of Jehovah, but he exhibits him to that nation under the threefold denomination of Jehovah—Ab,—the self-existent Father; Jehovah—El,—the self-existent Teacher or Illuminator; and Jehovah—Ruach, or the self-existent Spirit. And Elohim, under which denomination the Eternal is so often spoken of, by Moses, is the plural of Eloah, and indicates plurality of existence. You cannot serve Jehovah, says the author of the book of Joshua, for he is the *holy Elohim*; which literally translated is, *you cannot serve the Self-Existent, for he is the holy Gods*. And this is only one example out of many throughout the sacred writings. Hence the Jews, as appears, by the oldest commentators on their law, seem at all periods to have entertained this principle. And in the time of our Saviour, they were evidently not offended at his doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but at the presumption, as they supposed, of his making himself *the Son of God*; thereby, *making himself equal with God*.

Such have been the doctrines, or traditions concerning the divine existence cherished in the most distinguished nations of the ancient world. And it is far from being an improbable conjecture that they contributed in no small degree, to prepare the minds of mankind for the favourable reception of the true

**doctrine on this subject, when it was revealed by our blessed Saviour.**

But so various is the human mind in the strength of its powers, and the diversity of its fancies, or prepossessions, that it soon became divided into different systems in interpreting the sacred standard transmitted to us by Christ, and his apostles. Many crude notions seemed to rise and fall almost at the same moment, in the primitive church, being only the transient ebullitions of a fanatical fancy, arising from the fermentation of ancient opinions with the new principles imperfectly understood. A multitude of these errors are enumerated by all the ecclesiastical historians, who merely record their existence and their extinction. But not having been embraced by any permanent sect in the church, they merit little regard; and are hardly entitled even to be mentioned in a system like the present. A few only of those whose leaders have been more distinguished by their talents, or have made more extended divisions among the body of christians I will recall to the notice of my readers, merely stating their peculiar and discriminating ideas upon this subject, with such conciseness as the brevity of this work requires.

The Sabellians, who take their denomination from a man respectable for his learning and talents, maintain the unity of God in the strictest sense; and interpret the titles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as expressive only of the



different relations of Creator, Redeemer, and Moral Governor, which he sustains to mankind in the economy of their redemption. Considering the extreme obscurity of our ideas upon this infinite subject, their error, acknowledging as they do, the Deity of our Saviour, cannot be regarded as one that deeply affects the system of our holy religion. The Trinitheists, conceiving that they would do greater honor to the respective persons of the Trinity, by adopting a contrary opinion, have assigned to each a separate, equal, and independent existence, making their union in one Supreme God-head consist, not in any natural and necessary participation of the same essence, but in a perfect concurrence of will, and co-operation of action in all their designs.—The Arians, on the other hand, borrowing their title from the celebrated presbyter of Alexandria, maintain that Christ is not properly God, but only the first and highest of all creatures, who has been taken into the most intimate union with the Deity, that he might thereby become the Saviour of the world; conjoining the merit arising from the grandeur of this divine relation, with that of the obedient and suffering condition of human nature in him. Out of these another class has arisen, who most nearly approach the orthodox principle, making Christ, not properly a creature, nor in the high and independent sense of the Father, God. The most noted of the modern Arians appear to have adopted the ideas of the celebrated Samuel Clark, who stands among the first metaphysicians of any age, that the Filial is an eternal, and necessary ema-

Deity ; which may be illustrated, be capable of any illustration from rocession of light from the body of of the same essence with the body ; yet, being derived, though a necessary cause, it is to be regarded as this great man suppose to be the upon the Father.—Opposed to all existence are the Pelagians or Soci-

The objects of equal, and undivided worship. In the economy of human redemption, however, the Paternal Deity, is to be considered as actually exercising the rights of divine authority. —The Filial Deity as being the immediate minister of the divine mercy by his atonement and intercession ;—and the Holy Spirit as applying the revelation of the divine mercy for the sanctification of the heart, and qualifying the disciples of the faith, by his gracious influence for the possession and enjoyment of eternal life. In all acts of worship it is the principle of christianity, that we address the Father, through the Son, by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

#### PROOF OF THE TRINITY.

Having stated, as concisely and distinctly as possible, the christain principle upon this subject, I proceed to establish the evidence of the doctrine solely from the sacred scriptures. And, being, by every party, acknowledged to be a doctrine purely of revelation, I reject every modification of human reason on a subject on which reason is utterly incompetent to judge, and could, therefore, only mislead. I equally reject from this demonstration, every part of the sacred text on which any doubt can be raised of the genuineness of the copy, the scriptures being full and abundant on the subject, after every deduction that the most scrupulous enemy can require. And this concession is made, not from any hesitancy which can justly be entertained concerning the au-

disputed passages, which have been  
 of our commonly acknowledged ver-  
 elementary treatise intended for the  
 the comfort, instruction, and estab-  
 christian, no proof may be presented  
 be seen to rest only on the most se-

arranged into such as are general

quoted from Saint Paul in the second chapter of the epistle to the Philippians\* I omit, for the reasons already assigned, and rely, at present, on two positive and explicit attestations contained in the first chapter of the gospel of the apostle John, and the fifth chapter of his first Epistle.—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.—And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ,—this is the true God, and eternal life.” If it had been the purpose of our Heavenly Father to teach this doctrine to the world so that no mistake or error could be committed with respect to it, we cannot easily conceive how it could be taught in stronger, and more explicit language. Convinced of this, as one would think that every man of candor and fairness must be, we see those, who deny the principle, obliged to take refuge in the utmost ingenuity, and even sophistry of criticism to elude the force of the evidence which arises from the obvious construction of the sacred writings. If these terms are explained to a different and more circuitous meaning, all certainty is taken from the scriptures, and human ingenuity may equally bend them to the support of the most opposite opinions.

This argument is, in no small degree, confirmed by the frequent and pointed references made by the apostles to the

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\* Phil 2. 6.

prophetic and mosaic writings, in which Christ is spoken of as the Angel of the covenant, and addressed as Jehovah that glorious being to whom the highest characters of divinity belong, and for whom the profoundest worship of mankind is claimed. By comparing the New Testament with the old, it becomes evident that the Son was God, adored by the patriarchs, and the Author and Subject of all those divine appearances exhibited to these eminent Saints recorded in the ancient scriptures. It strengthens the proof already produced of this doctrine being always acknowledged by the hebrew nation, and the primitive church, from the beginning of the world. It renders probable likewise the opinion of those great men, equally conspicuous for learning and piety who believe that this world was created principally to illustrate the glory of God in the redemption of man ; and that it was, for that purpose, from the beginning, put under the immediate dominion and administration of the Son of God. These ideas must forcibly impress the pious inquirer who candidly studies the sacred writings, and compares the christian era with the most ancient periods of the Mosaic economy. The declaration of the apostle in the seventh chapter of the Acts ; “ This is he who was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers,” most evidently refers to the history of the Exodus in the third chapter. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked, and behold the bush burned with fire ; and the bush

was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said Moses, Moses. And he said, here am I. And he said draw not nigh hither : put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," Behold then, Jesus Christ presiding as Jehovah in the ancient church, and acknowledged to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.—Many passages contribute to shew that Christ was the supreme Ruler and Guide of Israel in their progress through the wilderness to the land of promise. And for the perfect Deity of Jesus Christ acknowledged in both branches of the church, a proof more precise and strong can hardly be adduced, than that of the apostle in the beginning of his epistle to the Hebrews, quoting the forty fifth Psalm, where the prophet under the full spirit of inspiration, saith of *the Son, thy throne O God is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.* And the evangelist John, in the twelfth chapter of his gospel, applies to Christ one of the most sublime descriptions of Jehovah recorded in the sacred writings ; " In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, above it stood the Seraphim ; each one had six wings ; with twain he covered his feet, with twain he covered his face, and with twain he did

other and said; holy, holy, holy, is  
 whole earth is full of his glory. Is. 6.  
 the evangelist, said *Esaias*, when  
 is, the glory of Christ, of whom he  
 and spake of him.

is not less forcible, of the Deity of  
 ascription to him of all the peculiar



day, to day, and forever.” And he himself testifies his own omnipresence,—“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them Mat. 18. And lo! I am with you always to the end of the world Mat. 28. I add, in the last place, that all divine attributes are embraced in the work of creation, which is explicitly ascribed to the Son: “for by him, all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things; and by him all things consist: Col. 1. 16.” Creation forms the supreme relation between the Creator and the creature. It is the true foundation of worship, and constitutes exclusively that perfect right claimed by the Eternal to our duty and obedience. *All things were made by him, saith the evangelist John: and therefore the Father hath committed all judgment, that is, the entire government of this world, to the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.*

These proofs, although consisting of a very small number selected out of the great mass of the scriptures proportioned to the brevity which I contemplate, afford ample confirmation of the true and proper Deity of the Son; and, in that, they establish beyond reasonable doubt the doctrine of the Trinity. No small degree of strength arises to the argument from the constrained reasonings by which its enemies study

to combat the force of this evidence. Some of the highest titles of divinity, it is alleged, are not bestowed on the Son, which are ascribed to the Father, such as the *Almighty*, the *Most-High*. Can any objection more obviously demonstrate the weakness of the cause which is obliged to have recourse to such evasions, when other titles, equally characteristic of the divine nature, are, with greater frequency, applied to him? Besides, a part of those titles which are supposed to be exclusively appropriated to the Almighty Father, are, most, obviously, used, not as marking any superiority of nature, but, along with others, as distinctive characters of the different persons of the Trinity. To give only one example; *There is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things.* Will it not require some peculiar depth of understanding to assign the superiority of *of* to *by*, and, in the act of creation, to say which is expressive of the greater power, or the greater dignity?

The objectors presume, that the terms expressive of the highest powers of divinity are applied to Christ, as belonging to him only in an inferior degree. And presuming indeed it is, to attempt to graduate the divine perfections, or his creative operations, by our limited standard. What measure have the scriptures given us to fix the import of these phrases except the obvious meaning and connexion of the terms? What gradations can be fixed in the powers of

creation, omnipotence, and omnipresence? Such objections never could be suggested but by a falacious reason which presumes to measure the divine nature by its own narrow views; and under the powerful influence of a prejudice which, having fixed its philosophic theological system independently of that sacred regard to the simple dictates of the word of God which ought to govern the ideas of every christian, studies to bend the rule of faith to its preconceived opinions.

The force of the argument derived from the powers of creation ascribed to Christ these writers think to weaken by changing in some instances the import of the word translated *worlds*. *By whom also*, saith the apostle to the Hebrews, *he made the worlds*; which phraseology they render; *by whom also he constituted the ages*; meaning the different dispensations of the church, the patriarchal, the mosaic, and the christian. Little advantage, however, can be gained to their cause by this change, when the full import of the terms is fairly considered. Less they cannot imply, if we give them any meaning worthy the solemnity of the divine oracles, than that the whole moral order of the universe has been originally constituted, and, at all times, arranged and governed exclusively by the providence of the Son.—But is this *ess* the property of divine power, or the work of divine wisdom than is the physical constitution and order of the universe?—The most ingenious evasions, therefore or colour-

age of scripture, leave entire the evidence of the perfect Godhead of the Son.

is of the Deity of the Holy Spirit, in our attention; in which it is necessary distinct personality, and that he is a quality, expressive of the holiness. The import of the word *spirit*, is un-  
derstood, only by the ac.

to the other persons of the everblessed Trinity. We have, indeed, no further controversy on this important doctrine.

No question now remains, which merits, in any degree, the attention of the student of theology, except that which, for a long time, imprudently agitated the eastern, and the western christians, concerning the procession of the Son and Holy Spirit, and that chiefly as a subject of history. A question on this high and inscrutable doctrine it is which is impossible to be clearly and intelligibly decided; nor do we perceive any important moral consequence that could result from the decision. The Greek church maintained that both the Son and the Holy Ghost proceed from the Father only. The Latin church contended that the Son proceeds from the Father, but the Holy Spirit equally from the Father and the Son.—On a controversy of this nature we ought to speak with extreme reserve, and to assert with positiveness nothing but what is clearly warranted by the scriptures themselves; permitting no modification of the language or ideas to our own fancy. When we listen solely to the sacred writers the evangelist John declares that the Spirit *proceedeth from the Father*;\* but he is also called by the apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, and other churches, the Spirit of the Son.† When we would conceive, or explain this doctrine farther than the strict terms of revelation import, the mind

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\* John 15. 26.    † Romans 8. 9. Gal. 4. 6. Phil. 1. 19

attempt entirely beyond the powers

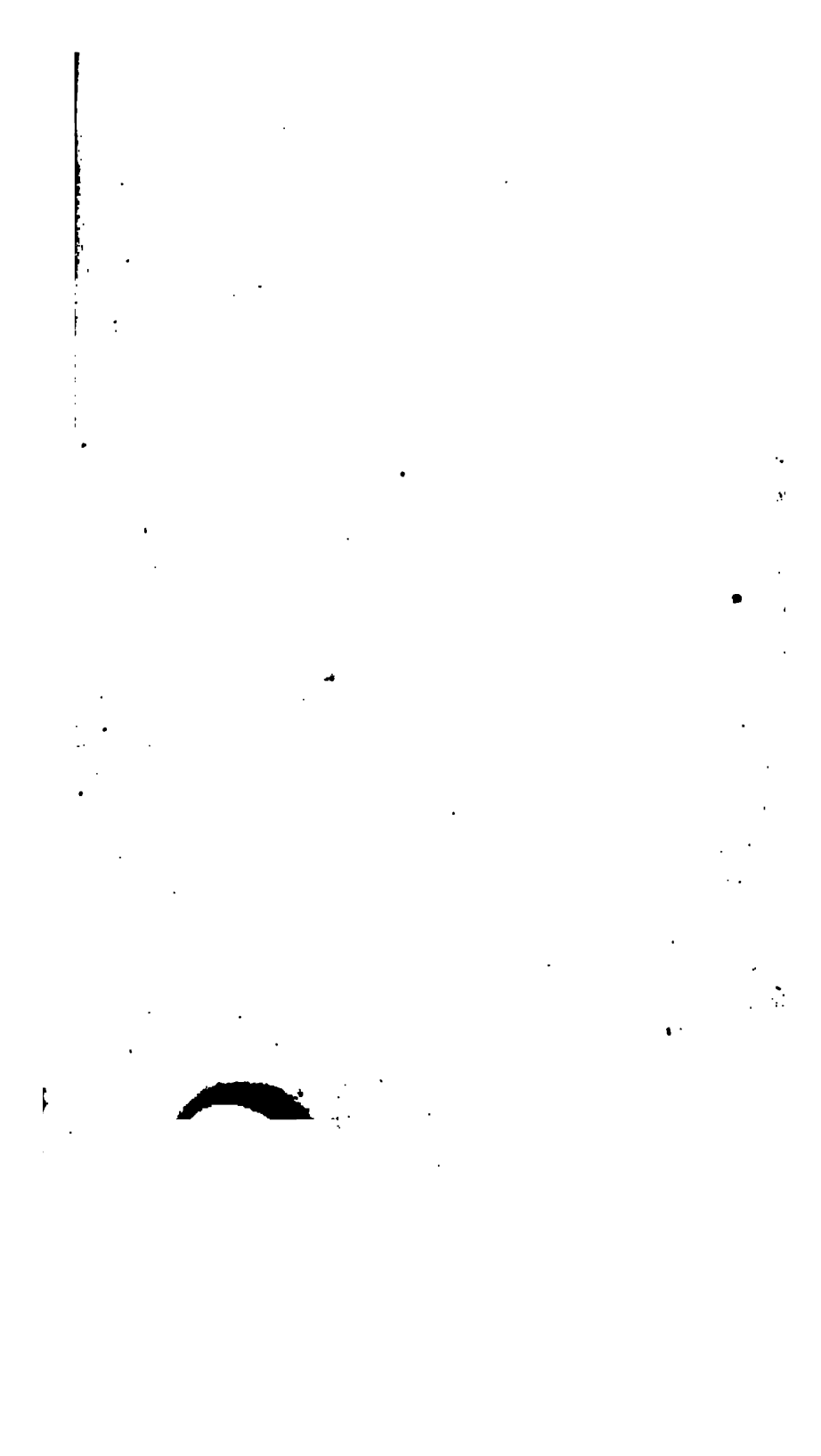
And although the terms of scripture  
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**OF THE**

**DECREES OF GOD.**

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OF THE  
**DECREES OF GOD.**

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**HAVING** treated of the being of God, and of that idea of the divine nature and perfection presented to us in Holy Scripture, the subject which next occurs to our consideration is his immediate agency and control over all the works of his hand, usually styled, in our theological systems, his *Decrees*. By this term is intended the sovereign and holy will of God concerning all things that exist, not only in their being, but in all their changes and actions from the greatest to the most minute. They embrace the entire system of the universe, both physical, and moral, corporeal and spiritual, and, in the language of philosophy, constitute the universal laws both of matter and of mind; which are so ordained, in their original structure, as, by their natural operation, to attain every purpose of the all-wise Creator. But divines, with justice, perhaps, entertaining a suspicion of the language of philosophy, as if it kept the immediate agency of God too much out of view, by interposing the natural law between him and the event, and willing to present him always to the mind, in all the changes of the universe, have chosen to employ the terms ordination, and predestination as exhibiting

the ultimate cause of whatever takes place in heaven or on earth. No event can happen but in consequence of the laws which he has established, and established with a full, immediate and present view of every result which should spring from them. And as the whole creation was, at all times, present before him, from the beginning, and nothing, strictly speaking, can be considered as either past, or to come in the view of omniscience, his preordination or decree is justly regarded as embracing every event, and all events are seen as being immediately obvious to his view, and arising naturally out of the train of causes which he has ordained.

This term, as it has been adopted by theologians, is merely technical, and has an appropriate meaning, being used to signify the divine purposes with respect to the whole order of nature, but chiefly with respect to the moral states and destinies of mankind. It is evidently borrowed from an analogy supposed to exist between the divine and human governments, and is consequently employed to express the *will of Almighty God* as the supreme legislator and governor of the universe.

Few words, in the Old Testament, have been translated by this term, and, in every place where they are employed they might, with equal propriety, have been rendered by the terms statute, law, or purpose. In the version of the New Testament it is no where found, although the equiva-

lent expressions *counsel, purpose, foreknowledge, predestination*, frequently occur; which language, especially when it relates to the moral states, and conditions of men, evidently imply all that is intended by *decree*, as it has been introduced into the systems of theology.

To many, who appear not to have justly reflected on the subject, this term carries in it somewhat gloomy and austere, as implying that all the actions, and the final states of mankind have been fixed by an *arbitrary* will, and that their whole moral government turns on principles of necessity, equally with those which govern the material world. But when we identify his *decrees* with the *laws of universal being*, producing their effects, with certainty, indeed, but freely or necessarily, according to the nature of each subject, this apparent harshness ceases to exist. No reasonable doubt can be entertained by any reflecting man, but that all things, from the beginning have been determined by the Creator in a certain order, which order must arise out of the laws of their respective natures, and the combinations of each subject with all other things. And these all having been framed by their glorious Author with the most perfect foresight, their infinitely various results must have been present to his all comprehensive view. On the most obvious principles of reason, therefore, the divine foreknowledge of events, must have been founded on the divine will in framing the universal structure of things, and impressing upon them respectively

The results being, in consequence, whole must have been conceived consistent plan according to the de- sical events arising out of the ne- l motion, and moral consequences s of motive and volition.

clearly deduced from the princi-

evidences of this truth which speak in every page of the holy scriptures. Of those who sincerely love God the apostle speaks as being "called according to his purpose ; for whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." And the whole of this ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans appears to have been written with the most palpable intention to remove all ambiguity from this subject. Suffer me to quote only the eleventh verse : "The children, being not yet born, neither having done any good, or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said, the greater shall serve the younger ; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

Can words proclaim, with more decisive evidence, the preordination of events, and of those events particularly. I mean the moral states of mankind, which have given rise to the most formidable objections to the truth on this interesting question. Attend to the pointed language of the sacred writer—the election of one to honor is not made on any antecedent view of his good works ; *for it is not of works, but of him that calleth*, founded only on reasons in his own infinite and inscrutable wisdom. Not that any one is chosen without, or wholly independent of his good works, but his works are themselves the object of the decree, and are embraced in the same act, and with the election of the believer ; and this without the smallest infringement on the perfect freedom of

er as has before been observed, the  
have been so framed as, by their na-  
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to evade the force of this conclusion,

The conclusion, however, has been opposed by some specious reasonings, an explicit answer to which will serve to add strength to the general argument. They arise chiefly from moral considerations. For the government of the natural world is resigned by these writers, without controversy, to the dominion of fixed, necessary, and immutable laws. The doctrine of preordination, they affirm, stands in direct contradiction to the moral liberty of man; and to the essential benignity of the divine nature.—Of each let us take a very brief review.

The former inferences evidently springs out of those false metaphysics which confound the voluntary and moral action of the mind, with the physical and mechanical laws of body. A confusion which has been greatly promoted by the common error of recurring, in all our reasonings concerning the one, to analogies and illustrations borrowed from the other; as if the suasion of motive bore a perfect analogy to the impulsive force of matter, which is always followed by a necessary effect, that can be calculated with mathematical precision, when the acting force is known, and the direction given in which it is impressed. For the influence of motive, on the other hand, no sure and general measure can be formed, its power of excitement depending on the nature of the motive as relative to the character and temperament of the individual, varied as it may be by education, custom, the influence of general opinion, and innumerable circumstances

no certain rule. Where necessity  
deliberation and choice ; but where  
only operates, addressed to the mo-  
re, we are conscious of a power with-  
ly comparing and ballancing motives,  
cause, yielding to one, or another.

perations of our own minds, uninflu-



with the most absolute *certainly* in the event, which, indeed, is the only foundation of foreknowledge in God himself. And in the Divine Mind, foreknowledge and preordination are the same; for it rests on the certain laws which he has ordained for all being, in both the great departments of the universe. Therefore, are they often promiscuously used in the sacred scriptures. To illustrate these reflections by an humble example drawn from our own experience. Even with our imperfect knowledge of mankind, and of the usual relations which subsist between motive and conduct, how often can we predict with assurance the tenor of a man's actions, in given circumstances, and frame upon them our own plans, without any hazard of mistake? How often may a parent who has long observed the influence of his instructions upon a child, predict, with the utmost assurance, at the same time, without the smallest apprehension of the existence of any necessary influence in the case, the act of his son in any definite situation? If the human intellect can proceed with safety thus far, cannot the all-creating and omniscient Power, who is fully possessed of the characters, temperament, inclinations, habitudes, and the ten thousand minute views and interests which go to influence the actions of individuals, foreknow, and, therefore, if he please ordain and decree the part which each shall bear in the most complicated moral system, and in the whole drama of life, without the smallest infringement on the liberty of the mind in her volitions?

divines of the necessarian school, physical action, see infinite difficulty influence of motive with the other hand, they find equal difficulty of events, if, at the same depend on the will of *free agents*. ending difficulties, they have de- fence, to maintain that moral caus- of absolute and irresistible necessi-

character, possess a perceptible influence on action—that this influence, in most instances at least, is not irresistible ; but that, in acting, we are perfectly free ; and this sensation is not a delusive feeling, but carries with it complete conviction of its truth, which ought never to be overthrown by any hypothetical speculation. Yet such connexion between motives and actions exists, according to the states and characters of men, that, where these, in all their relations and circumstances are completely known, certainty accompanies moral as well as natural causes and effects. By the Almighty and Omniscient Creator, then, all the thoughts and purposes of mankind, all the circumstances and motives which can in any way influence their actions, were, from eternity most distinctly known. Yet his foreknowledge does, in no way, necessitate the events connected with it, although it proves his preordination ; that is, their certain existence, according to, and resulting from the order of nature, whether physical or moral, established by him.

That the moral liberty of man and the preordination of God, do not militate against one another, is susceptible of demonstration even on the principles of those who most strenuously oppose our doctrine. Let us suppose, for the sake of the argument, the present state of human nature to be a state of moral liberty, as perfect as the greatest enemies of divine preordination can imagine ; suppose that there is no preordination in the system of the universe, but that all things

pose, on the part of the Creator, we confess that they take place in a certain order and effects ; or if, with Mr. Hume, we consider in the vocabulary of nature the name of fate, we say that all things happen in a certain dependence on preceding and consequent events ; or in a series of causes, or succession of events, or in a certain state of virtue and of vice, or in a certain means be foreseen by the Infinite

inconsiderate, or most prejudiced disregard of the genuine structure, and operations of our moral nature.

OF MISERY AND VICE, AS OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE DECREES.

The existence of vice and misery in the works of God, is esteemed by those who deny the divine preordination of all events, to form an insuperable objection, equally with the former, against the admission of the doctrine, involving, as they conceive it does, the deepest imputation on his goodness, and his holiness. Small reflection, it should seem, would be requisite to demonstrate, that a cavil of this kind could never be resorted to, where the subject had been duly considered. The very existence of these evils forms an irrefutable answer to the objection; or we must embrace a principle most unworthy the divine wisdom and power. I have no hesitation to admit that their existence, by whatever means they were introduced, or for whatever end they were permitted, entered originally into the designs of Heaven, for the administration of this world. Their being is as great a mystery to reason as their being ordained. To say that they have been merely *permitted*, without any interference, or concern of Almighty God in the actions of men, is only attempting, by the illusion of a word, to throw the difficulty out of sight, not to solve it. If he has permitted the introduction of evil, has it not arisen out of the constitution of his

own work? or, in other words, had its birth in those very laws of nature which he has established in the universal system of things? Let the friends of this phraseology reconcile the event to the divine perfections, and the friends of the doctrine of universal preordination will be able, on the same grounds, to demonstrate the consistency of these perfections with the decree by which sin freely exists, through the perverted will of the creature, and its punishment necessarily follows. That this may be accomplished without any infringement on the rational liberty of the mind, our own experience sufficiently attests. If it be esteemed more difficult to reconcile the misery and guilt of our nature with the benignant perfections of the Deity, this difficulty is at least equal on all systems.

In examining the principles of Natural Religion, I have already endeavoured to vindicate the goodness of God in the existence of the manifold evils of human life, either as correctors of its errors, and assistants towards regaining its original perfection, or laying the foundation, ultimately for its social and intellectual improvement and happiness. Hereafter, I shall contemplate them in the light of revelation, and shew how the infinite benignity and wisdom of the Eternal is justified and illustrated in the sacred writings, in all the miseries which have overwhelmed this his greatest and best work.

**OF THE OBJECTS, THE ORDER, AND THE CHARACTERS OF  
THE DIVINE DECREES.**

In the elucidation of the general subject of the decrees, several important questions have been offered to our consideration by theological writers of different sects, which merit our attentive reflection. They respect chiefly, the objects of the decrees—the order in which they have been arranged—the characters ascribed to them in the holy scriptures.

1. The objects of the decrees and purposes of God our Creator are strictly the universe of things, with all their conditions, and changes ; and in moral agents, particularly, their thoughts, affections, and their whole conduct ; the advantages and disadvantages of their situation, their virtues and their vices. From eternity, these were all in the purview of the Divine Mind, and, in time, embraced within the designs, and subjected to the order of his *providence*, which is only the operation of the Supreme Creator in the execution of his eternal purposes.

2. The greater part of those writers who are friendly to the system of decrees, afraid, at the same time, of seeming to detract from the holiness of God, have, in order to avoid this impious consequence, thought it useful to conceive of the di-

vine purposes in a certain order, which has, therefore, been styled the *order of the decrees*. Every scheme, however, for arranging them, labours under the same essential defect; that of seeming to represent a succession in the Divine Mind, similar to what must necessarily take place in the designs and plans of men. In the purposes of God there can be no succession. The entire system of nature, with all its *changes*, is at once present to his view, and the purpose of giving them existence is one act, and co-eternal with his being. He sees the end in the means, and the means in the end. So that any order applied to his eternal counsels is only an error in our own conceptions. An order, indeed, must be observed in their execution. And this perhaps it is, which has been attempted to be marked in this expression by the authors of the various systems, though by some inaccuracy of language, transferred to the decrees themselves. As this technical phraseology, however, has been adopted by many eminent divines of different sentiments, and modified according to their respective systems, in order to obviate, or evade the difficulties arising out of the introduction of sin into the works of God, I shall briefly state the manner in which the subject has been attempted to be explained, by the three principal sects; the Socinians, the Arminians, and the Calvinists. If we should not perfectly accord with any one of these great parties in religion, and utterly reject many of the principles of others, still it is useful for the theological student, and the judicious christian, to be informed of the peculiar tenets of



each, with as much precision as such a compendious system will admit.

1. The followers of Socinus deny the decrees of God as they imply, ultimately, any eternal purpose of illustrating the glory of his mercy, or his justice, in the salvation, or the condemnation of men. Their general principle upon this subject may be expressed in the following summary.—The Supreme Creator decreeing, from the beginning, to form man a moral agent, capable equally of virtue, or of vice, determined to commit him solely to the direction of his own powers, subject only to those rewards of virtue, or chastisements of vice, which naturally arise out of the regular and fixed course of divine providence. The penalties, or remunerations, of the one or of the other, are, according to their ideas, those only which are caused by the wisdom, or folly, the discretion or improvidence of men themselves. But in this, and in all things else, the ordination and immediate agency of God in giving effect to his own laws in the system of nature, are, in a great measure, overlooked, and left, it is to be feared, equally out of their scheme of doctrine, and the minds of their disciples.

But they object, especially, against considering either the fall or the recovery of mankind, as forming any object of the divine decrees, farther than the general purpose of sending a prophet to enlighten and instruct the world. As men,

however, are free agents, their virtue, or their vice, their pious use, or their unholy rejection of his revelation, cannot properly be regarded, even as subjects of foreknowledge, and still less of any divine decree. The general purpose, therefore, of the Eternal, to punish or reward them, according to their deserts, is suspended solely on the actual existence, in time, of the contingent facts which constitute their merit, or demerit. This system appears in a worse form in many of its recent disciples than it did in the founder of the sect. As it has been embraced by a great portion of them, it can hardly be regarded in any other light than as a modified theory of Natural Religion.

2. The Arminians admitting, in general terms, the decrees of God, study to arrange them in such order as shall be most favourable to their peculiar system, fixing a few principal points of christian doctrine, but omitting, at every step in their progress, some portion of the entire chain which connects the beginning with the end. The outlines of their theory may be traced out in the following propositions.—God, in his wise decrees, originally determined to create man in perfect innocence, but fallible—foreseeing his fall, but without any regard to the mode of its accomplishment in their decree or to that train of seductions which led to the fatal catastrophe.—The next object of the decree, was, considering man as fallen, to send a Saviour into the world as the medium of his restoration and recovery—for this purpose, he

determined to impart to all men sufficient grace, if properly improved, to bring the sinner to repentance, and to assist the penitent to fulfil all righteousness; but without clearly marking the distinction between, what is called sufficient grace, and that which is effectual; or rather making no distinction between them, except the superior means, and opportunities enjoyed by one above another—finally, it was decreed, that those who improve their means and opportunities to sincere repentance, shall be brought to eternal salvation, whereas those who wilfully continue in their sins, shall be consigned to just perdition. But here those innumerable open, or secret, and often indiscernable causes which conduce, in different minds, to sincere repentance, are wholly left out of the purview of the decree. And in all the system of these good men, neither the fall of man, nor the repentance of any of his posterity, nor, in one word, any act of a free agent, is admitted to be a proper object of divine decree.

Here we see only a few points fixed in the purposes of Heaven; and, in the wide intervals between them, which embrace the greater portion of human life, we see not the actions of the mind, and the immense circumference of motives, occasions, and means which are combined for the production of any event, and particularly, for bringing the sinner to repentance, at all contemplated in the decrees of God.

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**And what further can be intended in the decrees of God, by the warmest friends of this phraseology?**

Almighty God, in sending a Saviour, has further graciously decreed, according to their system, to impart to all men grace sufficient, if wisely improved, for all the purposes of repentance and new obedience; but the improvement of that grace, they add, forms no object of the decree, but is resigned simply and entirely to the will of man himself.— But these principles will naturally fall to be more particularly considered, hereafter, in treating of the Covenant of Grace.

3. Calvinists, on this subject, are thrown into two great divisions of Supralapsarians, and Sublapsarians, taking their denominations from that point on which they are found principally to differ. The latter, although they do not hesitate to apply the decrees of God universally to the present states and actions of men, whether good, or bad, yet, like the Arminians, study to exclude the Fall from the counsels, and purposes of Jehovah, and commence their decretal system, only after man has already become mortal, and involved in sin. Before that period, their language, at least, appears to represent the Deity, the benignant parent of the universe, in a kind of inactive state, waiting till man himself, by his own independent and sinful act, fix the unhappy destinies of his race. The cautious timidity with which these writers ap-

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pralapsarians hold, at least, the most consistent language. In the order of the decrees, they argue that the end proposed to be attained, must, as in every wise system, have had the priority in the contemplation of its author. After that, the means conducing to its accomplishment will, with propriety follow. These principles may appear more distinctly in the outline of this scheme which is exhibited in the following series of propositions.—Almighty God having purposed in the economy of this world, to illustrate the union of his mercy, and his justice, and in the prosecution of this end, to display the glory of his Son, decreed to create man holy, but free—and in the progress of his ultimate design, he decreed the fall of our first parents ; that is, that the state in which they should be placed, and the whole combination of motives operating on the natural principles of action, should most freely lead to the accomplishment of that event, so distressing in itself, but so necessary to the illustration of the glory of his grace—he decreed in consequence, to send the Saviour, with whom he deposited the whole economy of this merciful dispensation, placing it under his immediate administration. He decreed, moreover, the salvation of a chosen number of the human race, preparing those means which would certainly lead, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to the fulfilment of his gracious purpose ; leaving, in the same act, those who should be disobedient, and unholy, to the guilt and infelicity of their natural state. The intention of the divines who employ this language, is simply to assert the universal agency of God, in

both the moral and physical systems of nature ; at the same time, to preserve entire the freedom of the human mind, and to free Almighty God, most holy, just, and good, from the blasphemous imputation of being the author of sin.

Are not the universal laws of nature so ordained as to attain, by their natural operation, every end for which they were evidently designed by the Creator ? It is the inquiry of a Supralapsarian—Can any event spring into existence but in exact conformity with those laws, the nature and the ends of which have been designed by God ? Admitting this conclusion, what are denominated his decrees can be nothing more than the development of the laws of nature both moral and physical, according to his will, and to the constitution of the agent, and the subject of their action ; free where morals and accountability are concerned ; necessary where the materiality of the subject requires it—and *certain* in all. For to an omniscient Being, who is perfectly acquainted with the nature and influence of every motive, its combination, and co-action, with all other means, and with the peculiar temperament of each individual agent, moral effects are as certain, in their order, as the results of any physical causes whatever. Apply these reflections to the fall ; though it has taken place in conformity with a divine decree, it was as much the free effect of motive on an intelligent being capable of being swayed by his appetites and passions, as any of the ordinary actions of human life. It is true, the agency of the serpent is



represented as the medium through which the fatal choice was produced. But as no miraculous power is alleged in the case, it was entirely effected by the suasion of motives freely addressed to the natural and yet uncorrupted principles of the soul. If, then, we can suppose circumstances to exist, in the correspondence of the dispositions, still innocent of human nature, with the temptations, addressed to them, which, by their free and natural action, would be followed by a dereliction of duty, would the will of God giving existence to these circumstances, in conformity to his ultimate designs, call it *decree*, or by whatever less offensive name you please, impose any fatal necessity upon the act, or render the divine agency in the existence of those circumstances, in the smallest degree more arbitrary or unjust, than their existence by any other cause? This justification of the principles of the Supralapsarian, who takes it as an acknowledged fact, that the decrees of God embrace the whole system of the universe, appears perfectly conformable to the dictates of the soundest reason.

If his antagonists demand, do not these ideas impute the sin of man to his Creator, as being, if not immediately, yet ultimately and indirectly its author? He confidently replies, not more than those of the most strenuous defenders of our moral liberty. For it has formerly been shewn, that we always act with the most perfect consciousness of freedom in every choice, and the most entire control over our own ac-

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**THE CHARACTERS OF THE DECREES ASCRIBED TO THEM  
IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.**

Some distinguishing characters of the divine decrees, either directly, or by obvious implication, ascribed to them in the holy scriptures, will contribute to elucidate the general subject, and assist in the explanation of many important questions connected with them. Those which chiefly merit the attention of the metaphysician, or the divine, are, their eternity, their freedom, their sovereignty, their wisdom, their holiness, their absoluteness, and immutability.

1. That which primarily merits our consideration is their eternity. Nothing which implies succession, or change, is to be imputed to the Infinite Mind ; so that all his purposes are coeternal with himself. Therefore the apostle characterises his decree, as his *eternal purpose* ; and speaking of believers, he says, they have been chosen in Christ *before the foundation of the world* ; for all is eternity which is antecedent to the commencement of time.

A metaphysical, and probably improper question, as certainly it is useless, has been raised upon this subject by a vain curiosity—Whether the existence of the Sovereign Mind ought to be considered as antecedent to his decrees ? Obvious it is, that, in contemplating, or speaking of them,

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resembling that under which the physical world is held. It is declared in all the symbols of the orthodox reformed churches, that *God, from eternity, did most wisely, most justly, and most freely, decree whatsoever comes to pass.*—The only objection which has been plausibly urged against this principle, is that which has been maintained by the famous German philosopher Leibnitz, in his *Theodice*, in so superior a manner, that he may justly be esteemed the father of it. His maxim is, that infinite perfection implies necessity in all its acts. And the Eternal, being infinitely wise and good, must, from the unchangeable rectitude of his nature, choose on all subjects, only and necessarily that which is best. The conclusion which he infers from this principle is, that the system which God hath created, and the order of things which he hath established in it, *must, of all possible systems be the best* ; that is, in its nature, order, and arrangements, be the most perfect. This doctrine, on a transient inspection, is captivating to a speculative mind ; yet when closely examined, will be seen to be liable to unanswerable objections. It proceeds on the supposition that there are ideas of good, and of best antecedent, in the order of conception, to the idea of God, and independent of him, out of which he might make a selection, according to his pleasure, in organizing a created system, as an artist may select out of forms already existing, such as may best correspond with his present designs. Whereas nothing can exist without, or independent of God. He formed the ideas of the things, with

the things themselves. Nothing is *better* or *best* in nature but as he hath created it, and fixed its relations. Besides, these are definite terms of comparison among things, of the same kind actually existing. But, with regard to plans possible to infinite wisdom, it is, perhaps, an error in our conceptions, to suppose that there is any one which can be pronounced the *best*. To a finite subject it were absurd to ascribe this superlative quality. And if the subject be infinite, must not the possible combinations in an infinite system, be infinite and endless?\*

I must further observe on the idea of the *best possible system*, and the necessary nature of the divine decrees which, as a natural consequence, has been deduced from it, that it is pressed with two difficulties which have never yet been satisfactorily resolved; in the first place, the unreasonableness of presuming that Almighty God should have exhausted himself in the production of the universe, or should ever have exerted any ultimate effort of omnipotence; in the next place, the proximity of this idea to the fate of the Stoics; to which certainly it is, in language at least, too nearly allied, which was maintained by them, to be antecedent, and superior to the Deity.—The conclusion, therefore, still remains, that the decrees of God are most free, and that they are not either arrested or controlled by the laws of *necessity*.

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\* Witherspoon's Lectures.

3. **Their Wisdom, and their Sovereignty in the next place,** are usually joined together, by divines, in order to limit the conclusions on each side, which men are prone rashly to frame concerning them. God, as sovereign of the universe, has the most perfect right to ordain whatever seemeth good to him. And though all his acts are ever most just and equitable, yet, often, wrapped, as they are, in the profound depths of his wisdom, they appear, to our feeble vision, to be covered with clouds and darkness. His rights, as an infinite sovereign, ought, at all times, to command our unmurmuring obedience; and our conviction that all his commands are founded in equity and wisdom, are sufficient to engage our submissive acquiescence, although the reasons on which they move, are often concealed from our view. In the whole order of nature, and of providence, what we cannot explain, we resolve into the sovereignty of God. Not that any order, or arrangement of his may ever be esteemed arbitrary, and without reason; but, when we cannot fathom its wisdom, his authority, which is only another term by which to express his sovereign will, and his rightful dominion, ought ever to be deemed a sufficient reason for the obedience and duty of children to their heavenly Father. Frequently, the feebleness of the human mind is called to submission on this ground, arising from innumerable events occurring to our observation and experience, which baffle reason to account for, which elude conjecture, and in many instances, seem even to contradict our ideas of divine goodness and justice. In eve-

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discussions on this embarrassing subject; when the Almighty is introduced, speaking out of the whirlwind to decide the question, instead of reasoning on the wisdom and equity of his proceedings, he simply displays the majesty of his power in the works of nature. The humiliating inference from which was,—your intellects are too feeble to comprehend the wisdom of the principles on which my government moves. Vain it is, to attempt to unfold them to your darkened minds. I display before your senses the majesty of my power, that it may arrest your cavils against my inscrutable purposes, and leave on your hearts the deep conviction, that all the dispensations of the omnipotent Jehovah must be equitable and just.

Submission to the sovereignty of the divine administration, or the habitual acknowledgement of this principle, in all the events that befall ourselves, is deeply humbling to the self-confidence of human vanity. The mind is apt to revolt at a doctrine asserting even divine power in a tone apparently so arbitrary, and at acts the reasons of which lie far above its comprehension. It is only after repeated trials of its own powers in vain reasonings, and abortive conjectures, to explain the ways of God, that, lost in the complication, and depth of its inquiries, it is constrained at length to confess its impotence, and to acquiesce in the appointments of Heaven, simply saying it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.—In its first struggles with the ideas of the

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everlasting states of the human race, as if it implied that some sinners are chosen to the inheritance of eternal life, by an unreasonable predilection. This is never the meaning of any writer who thinks respectfully of the divine economy. Let us compare the preordinations of Heaven with regard to the present, and the future world. There is, in many respects, a manifest analogy between them. And the same reasonings which demonstrate the divine decrees with relation to the various conditions of the present life to exist without any infringement on the moral liberty of man, or impeachment of the justice of God, apply equally to the destinations of eternity. The states and conditions of men to which they are severally appointed in this world, are never separated in the decree of God, from the industry, the prudence, the talents, and all the means which, in the order of nature, contribute to the effect. And it is equally true that, wherever those means are properly applied, it is the usual course of providence that they accomplish their end; they gain and fix that state in life for the individual which is the will of God.—Let us transfer this analogy to the future state of each man. This state cannot be presumed to be the object of the divine decree, independent of the moral qualifications which prepare him for its possession, nor those qualifications independent of the means of divine culture which he enjoys, and the pious improvement which he makes of them. And, let it be remembered, that the aids which we possess of enlarging our knowledge in divine truth, and cul-

fine taste, are as certain in their operation and influence of the Holy Spirit, according to their extent, as the chain of causes in the natural world. The motives of election, therefore, are all those motives of holiness essentially connected with those opportunities of divine information,—of situation,—of example—of ex-

ligious ordinances, designed to form the understanding and the heart, to the love and obedience of divine truth, by which we have seen the ancient church cherished in the bosom of that favoured nation, not so much by any direct and miraculous operation on the hearts of the people, as by the excellence of her sacred institutions. So likewise is formed the believer, under the grace of the gospel, by the due improvement of his spiritual and precious privileges, accompanied by the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

Against the sovereignty of the divine decrees, in the election of nations, communities, families, and even individuals to peculiar means of moral cultivation, leading to the ultimate ends of religion, in the sanctification of the heart, the greatest assertors of human liberty, or revilers of divine decrees, find nothing to object; for the fact is before their eyes. And in the formation of a believer into the image of Christ, there is nothing different in the means, or motives employed, from those which operate in the whole church; unless that in particular instances, they may be applied, by the Blessed Spirit, with greater energy, or a finer adaptation to the character and state of different minds. For the lights, and instructions, and motives to conversion, given to the church at large, are those only which operate on each individual, and are abundant for all the purposes of piety, in the hands of that omniscient, and all-powerful spirit, who knows how to reach the heart, through them, with the finest insinuation, to move

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cheerless laws of necessity. Others, constrained by their reason to admit the universal foreknowledge of God, have, in order to account for the divine prescience, had recourse to an absurd principle of the school-men, called by them *scientia media*, which implies an antecedent apprehension of all things in the Divine Mind, in their proper nature, time, and place, resembling the immediate vision of all objects as in perspective ; as if present ; but abstracted from all consideration of their mutual relations as cause and effect, whence any rational inference could be formed concerning their existence. It is the contemplation of the universe throughout its whole duration and extent as a present object ; it is the knowledge simply of the facts, independent of every other consideration, by a mysterious power in the divine nature, no similitude to which has ever been imparted to any of his creatures. It is, I presume, a mere absurdity in our conceptions.

But the opinion which many pious and worthy men have embraced, of a necessity in our actions, which does not remove their guilt, deserves a more particular consideration.—It is said to be a necessity arising out of the natural inclinations of the mind, and, as the action entirely concurs with our will, it creates a feeling of liberty in pursuing our own pleasure, while governing our conduct with a force not only *certain* in the event, but irresistible in its cause. I am willing to believe that these good men, many of whom are distin-

guished by their pious and excellent writings, mean no more by this phraseology, than I have studied to express by that *certainty* which I have shewn may, and to the Divine Mind, does ever accompany moral, as well as physical causes. But I conceive their language to be exceptionable, and liable to dangerous abuse. Their reasonings in many of their principles, too evidently coincide with the doctrines of the Hobbesian school.

The *certainty* of all the purposes of God, is the chief ground on which these writers maintain the doctrine of *necessity*. The one they presume to be involved in the other. On the contrary, I conceive, that there is a clear and intelligible distinction between the ideas of *necessity* and of *certainty*, which, as happens in many other moral and intellectual truths, can be more easily conceived, or understood, by an internal *feeling*, than explained in precise and definite terms, which must convey ideas too fine and simple to be analyzed in language. All men can easily understand the difference between a thing *certainly* done by a free cause, and the same thing accomplished by an internal but unperceived force, so that it could not be otherwise than it is.

Many excellent men who profess to be the patrons of this system of necessity, but whose language, I am persuaded, is more in error than their hearts, lay it down as an axiom in their metaphysics, that the will is irresistibly determined by



the strongest motive at the time before the mind, and cannot act otherwise than it does ; not sufficiently attending to the entire difference between the nature and movements of mind and of matter, of motive, and of physical impulse. How can it be known that it is the strongest motive which, in every instance, governs our choice ? Do you say, as is commonly done, because it does govern ? This circle is obviously begging the principle in question—it governs our choice because it is the strongest motive ; and it is the strongest motive because it governs our choice. In opposition to this pretended maxim, the soundest metaphysicians, and the most accurate observers of the operations of the mind, agree with the learned and profound Dr. Reid of Glasgow, that we often act according to the direction of a weaker motive ; and sometimes act without any perceptible motive at all.

Although the mind seldom acts without motive ; yet it is not motive which exclusively determines its volitions ; or is the sole cause of action. This would be reducing action to a mechanical operation, and justify those material analogies, in explaining its nature, which I have before condemned.—The proper effect of motive is to solicit and excite the mind, and to put it into a state of action. But I have a power within me which *determines* my choice, on a view more deliberate, or more rapid, of the motives before it. If you ask me to explain that power—I feel it—I am sensible that I exercise it—and, in the feeling and exercise I understand the act.

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the actions of life, he having formed the various temperament of individuals, and disposed, in his providence, the whole train of motives, to the most minute, and often imperceptible, which continually operate upon all the springs and principles of action ; both which, the temperament of the individual, and the succession and combination of motives he has constituted, and ordained, and governs, in such a manner, in his church, under the all-wise direction of his Holy Spirit, as most effectually, yet most freely, to accomplish all his most wise and holy purposes.

Thus have I unfolded the ideas involved in the technical and systematic phrase—the *Decrees of God* ; which, being interpreted by the obvious and philosophic language of the *Laws of Nature*, or its various powers and tendencies of action, from which proceed, under God, as his organs of operation, all events, whether natural or moral in the universe, these decrees, which appear, to certain writers, with such a formidable aspect, stand on plain and intelligible ground, acknowledged, when rightly understood, by all the best friends of science and religion.

From the whole of these reflections it results, that the decrees of God are *eternal*, like his will and purposes in the laws of nature ;—they are most *certain* in their consequences, that is, they are *absolutely* ordained, a term equivalent to the former, except that it seems to carry in it more of the *author-*

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**OF THE**  
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**I** PROCEED, in the next place, to the consideration of the Covenant of Works, and the Fall of Man. This covenant, as it is contemplated in our systems, is the transaction represented to have taken place between man and his Creator at his first formation, wherein a law of duty was prescribed to him, under the explicit threatening of death, in case of transgression, and the implied promise of life, on the condition of obedience. His whole duty, however, in this covenant, was collected in a single prohibition as its test. It is proper to observe, that the term *covenant* is not employed in the history of this transaction by the sacred writer. But it is not the object of the holy scriptures to arrange for us systems, with scientific precision and method. They simply express things in a free and narrative order, so as to be most easily conceived, and applied to use by the plainest readers; and this diffusive style has been collected, by divines, into specific propositions, and disposed, according to the order and dependence of ideas, into a scientific form, which, for the con-

, and conciseness of expression, regular and technical phraseology. Of in this term. In the strictness of ed to it, a *covenant* could not take preme Jehovah, and the insect man. a stipulation between persons who al and free. Yet, as far as such an sed to exist between parties of such



mand, or prohibition for the trial of Adam's obedience. 2. In the second place, the full implication of the promise and the threatening. 3. Thirdly, the representative character of our first father in this transaction. 4. And lastly, the signification of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and of the tree of life.

# 1. ON THE SELECTION OF AN OBJECT FOR THE TRIAL OF MAN'S OBEDIENCE.

When we consider the natural imbecility of the human mind, and the limited sphere to which the range of its ideas is confined, it cannot be surprising, if, in the revelation of the divine will, in the holy scriptures, as well as in that natural revelation inscribed on the face of the universe, we should find many facts which it is difficult, and some which transcend the utmost powers of reason to explain. The enemies of revealed religion examine, with scrupulous ingenuity, every part of that sacred volume which contains its history ; and if its friends are not able to solve to the satisfaction of a captious philosophy, all the questions which, either the obliquity of ignorance, or the perversity of genius can raise upon it, they are inclined to reject the whole as a fable. No part of the whole system, perhaps, has been exposed to bolder inquiries than the Mosaic account of the fall of man, or been treated with more indecent levity than the test of his obedience proposed by divine wisdom in the fruit of the forbidden tree.

of science, the speculations of philosophy, without being able to arrive at conclusions on the subject, to account for the works of an all-powerful, all-wise God. Revelation has proposed only one way to it, without explicitly unfolding the principles which it holds to the purity and holiness of God; or pointing out the operations of the human mind, from innocence to guilt. The

God and man, might please himself with the hope of operating, not wholly without success.

Accordingly, the subject which Divine Wisdom selected for this probation, was the fruit of a single tree, of specious appearance, which alone was prohibited to man, of all the enjoyments furnished by the whole range of nature, and with this solitary exception, freely indulged to his use. This selection has afforded abundant matter of objection to ignorance, and of sarcasm to wit. Why was the proof of human virtue, it is asked, and, with it, the most important consequence to the whole family of mankind suspended on an action so trivial, if not contemptible, to use their own phrase, *as the eating of an apple?* Why was it not rested on some prominent precept, at least, of the moral code? To these inquiries let me answer, that we cannot, in all cases, and that we can, perhaps, in very few, enter into the reasons of the divine conduct, either in the structure, or the government of the universe. In the present instance, however, we have it in our power to propose some plausible conjectures, which may furnish sufficient grounds for the vindication, if not the perfect explanation of this portion of the divine economy, so little capable of illustration by any analogies drawn from the affairs of men.

This subject requires that we should not pass over it with a slight attention, inasmuch as every answer which can be

nature, which infused into the veins an insidious poison, inducing that mortal tendency to corruption in the whole frame, to which it fell at length an irremediable victim.

In these reflections we may perceive, I presume, a foundation laid for making a just estimate of the importance of the subject which was chosen as the original test of man's obedience. The fruits of the garden furnished the whole subsistence of human life. In them were found all the means of temperate enjoyment ; and, in the forbidden tree, at least, we discern what was equivalent to the most pernicious viands of luxury and intemperance. No subject could exist, at that period, of greater moment, for the trial of man's integrity and perseverance in the principle of all duty ; which consists, as has before been said, in obedience simply to the *will* of God.

I proposed, in the next place, to shew the probability that divine wisdom could hardly have selected a subject from a different class of objects, on which this trial could have been rested. It has already been suggested, that any act which should have involved direct impiety of aim, or indicated impurity of disposition, would have been so immediately revolting to a holy mind, that a temptation to the commission of it, could hardly, for a single moment, have entered the mind, or been entertained there with favour. And, it is obvious, that none of the precepts of the decalogue, could have afforded any grounds for being made, at this time, a test of

**this sublime duty. None of the moral relations of society, which we now see established among mankind, could then have yielded any possible occasion to transgression.—Let us examine them singly. Could man, for example, have denied the existence of God, or have profaned his holy name, or debased his nature by any of the images of idolatry, who daily held delightful commerce with him in the gardens of Paradise, and whose works were shining in all the freshness of their glory before his eyes, in the recent creation? Could the duty of children to their parents be violated by him who had no parent but God? How could murder, adultery, or falsehood in rendering testimony exist, where no subjects were found, on which these crimes could be practised? Or how should he covet, or trespass on the property of another, who was already lord of the whole creation?—It is evident, from these inquiries, that none of the moral precepts of the law could have been selected for this peculiar trial. It must be found only in some object addressing, exclusively the corporeal appetites, the indulgence of which, not involving any transgression of the laws of nature, would not of course, awaken any suspicion, or call up any extraordinary vigilance, or guard against the access of temptation. The restraint, of consequence, which this command imposed upon Adam, and his watchfulness against its approach, and the whole virtue of this act, was obedience simply to the divine will.—The prohibition, therefore, could affect only certain fruits of the garden. Within the compass of this**

were included all the objects which could minister any temptation to man's sensual appetites. From it alone could be drawn any trial of his virtue, in the circumstances in which he was placed. And among all its fruits, it is manifest that none was more proper than that which applied so strongly to the principle of curiosity as well as of taste, and promised, at the same time, to open to their mistaken imaginations, a new and boundless field of knowledge. A new field it was, both various and extensive, to those who had hitherto known only good: but, ah! how miserable when their fond fancies came to be blasted by the fatal experiment!

Of these circumstances, the great enemy of God, and of human happiness made his advantage to accomplish his evil designs, and, by insidious steps, to approach the innocent mind of our first mother. Direct guilt could not touch her untainted soul. The tempter, therefore, artfully covered the crime, in the apparent indifference of the object; and by his specious reasonings, and his dangerous example, in eating before her eyes of the same fruit without injury, led her confused and conflicting thoughts to the utmost verge of innocence. At last, her ardent thirst of knowledge, when she recollected that it was *a fruit to be desired to make one wise*, urged her, in the tumults of her mind, to yield herself up to the wiles of the tempter, and, in an unhappy moment, to pass the now imperceptible limit between her and vice. She was surprized by the artful snares which had been laid for her;

and, without being conscious of her state at first, *she fell*.—Intoxicated by the imaginary success of her experiment, and, at the same time perhaps, by the powerful juice of the fruit which she had just eaten, she brought a portion of it to her husband, and adding the irresistible force of her persuasions to the fascinating charms of her person, he yielded to the multiplied temptation, and he *fell with her*.

Will it be said that, if this picture should have any credence attached to it, our first parents appear to have been the victims of inadvertence rather than of guilt; their vigilance was surprized, and it would be a hard measure in the Creator to involve them in such fatal consequences for the inadvertence of a moment? Let it be remembered, that no inadvertence, or surprize can form a just apology for violating the positive command of God. Let us further reflect, that it is the certain and awful order of the moral world, that an imprudence, an intermission of our virtuous vigilance, an act of inconsiderate folly, is often the cause of irreparable calamities. Perhaps, men more frequently precipitate themselves into ruin, by what may be deemed imprudence, in the beginning, than by open crime, and hardened impiety.

The great ancestors of our race, inexperienced in the wiles of sin, had now arrived at the consummation of that fatal act which involved themselves and their whole race in irretrievable perdition. And, when the delirium, created by

that mortal juice, had subsided, they became conscious, for the first time, that they had forever lost the favour of God their Heavenly Father. They dreaded the approach of him whom they had so often met with confidence and joy, pouring at his feet the grateful homage of their hearts. When they heard the accustomed sign of his drawing near, they fled trembling from his presence, vainly thinking to *conceal themselves among the trees of the garden*. In the view of one another, as well as before the divine majesty they perceived that shame which is the disgraceful effect of sin, and in their confusion, they attempted to cover themselves with fig leaves.—This remarkable fact merits particular attention, as conveying a striking indication of the moral state of their minds, and perhaps also of the physical influence of the fruit which they had eaten.

The nakedness of their persons, which, in the period of their innocence, had never affected them with any emotions but such as were pure, now began to cover them with conscious blushes. Was it that the glow of beauty, and, perhaps, of a celestial radiance, which surrounded the primitive body of man, was now lost, and the deformity of a fallen nature began to appear? Or, was it that, formerly, the sentiments of devotion, of friendship, of a virtuous tenderness, of a sublime sympathy, of a high, noble, and intelligent conversation which reigned between them, so occupied their whole souls when together, that every pleasure of the



senses gave only a gentle heightening to the most pure and refined feelings of the mind ; but now, the tumults of a gross passion alone filled their hearts, always shameful, and, in their situation, incapable of being concealed, or subjected to the control of reason. Perhaps both these causes concurred to produce this singular incident in the history of the Fall. Their nature which had made a near approach to the angelic, was now sunk into a near resemblance of the brutal ; and as yet no Saviour had been announced to them, to tranquilize the tumults of their frame, or to correct the violence of their passions.

## 2. THE IMPORT OF THE THREATENING.

I am, in the next place, to consider the full implication of the threatening ;—*In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* ; whence we may deduce, by the most legitimate inference, the *Life* which, by contrast is involved in the condition of obedience.

This denunciation may justly be supposed to pronounce the immediate dissolution of the transgressor. And this is the meaning, perhaps, which most obviously obtrudes itself upon the mind of the reader. But it may express, merely, the sentence of the law, pronounced by the judge, in consequence of which the criminal is considered as dead to society, and, thenceforth, held in rigorous custody till the pe-

riod of execution appointed by the supreme authority, arrive. If the latter be the interpretation of this awful sentence, which is supposed by the greater number of divines, still such a change must have immediately passed upon the bodies of the condemned, that the powers of immortal life became instantly extinguished, and the seeds of death began to work in their living members. And the corporeal principles, among which are those powerful agents, the appetites and passions, must, from the intimate alliance which subsists between the different parts of our nature, have extended their taint through the whole system, mental as well as bodily. The terms of this sentence, therefore, include the moral death of the soul, which, without the provision of the gospel, must adhere to it while its being endures. In these reflections we recognize the extent of that death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which, according to our standards, was included in the denunciation on our first parents.

#### OF THE ORIGINAL IMMORTALITY OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

The opinion of those who would subject Adam to immediate death, in consequence of his transgression, I will present to you, after having taken a view of his representative character. In the mean time, it is obvious to remark, that this denunciation must imply that, in a contrary event, man would have existed forever in a state of holiness and happiness, nor have been liable to the corruptions of a mortal bo-

dy, and the pains of dissolution. A question has arisen, in consequence, among divines ; whether man would have continued his immortal being upon the earth, or have been translated, without pain, and, perhaps, with some high improvement of his nature, to a superior state of existence ? But, as God has not been pleased to make any revelation of his will upon this subject, the inquiry would be fruitless ; and, to propose any conjectures concerning it would indicate an unlicensed boldness of fancy, equally arrogant and vain. The enemies of revelation, indeed, have denied the possibility of the fact, that man should be immortal. The human constitution is said necessarily to tend to decay. The nerves by their very structure, although no disease should attack them, become rigid by age, and lose that elasticity which is requisite to carry on the functions of animal life.—This is judging of man before the fall, by the ruins of his nature since that fatal event. There are different species of organized matter, which seem calculated to endure forever, if not attacked by extraneous violence ; to instance only in the diamond ;—And why might not the substance of the human frame have been so modified as to be fitted for eternal duration, or that its changes should lead only to still increasing perfection ? Some great and essential change has evidently taken place, not only in man, but in all animals, and in the whole system of nature, intended to demonstrate the displeasure of Almighty God at that sin which has spread its baleful effects over the entire face of the world. The beasts

tures, from the crime of the Covenant-Head of the race to each man's personal transgression. The immediate and proximate cause of this fatal and universal catastrophe to Adam, and all his descendants, was the depravation of his nature, by the first act of sin, thereby impairing, and tending finally to destroy all the principles of life. This order of things is essentially connected with the established, and immutable laws of the universe, in consequence of which a depraved and perishing offspring necessarily springs from a corrupted stock. The version of this passage, therefore, would be better amended,—“so death passed upon all men, because that all in him have become subject to the effects of his sin;” that is, to that depravation of nature which renders them liable to death, and utterly incapable of eternal life; except through the Second Adam, who, by his death, has opened to the transgressor the way for repentance, and the obedience of a New-Covenant.

#### OF THE JUSTICE OF THIS INSTITUTION.

If the enemies of our holy religion demand the justice of this order which subjects a rational, and moral being to an *hereditary* depravity? I answer, that this is not an objection which peculiarly affects *revelation*. It is a difficulty equally in the *religion of nature*, and the philosophy of the universe. We cannot be fairly required to explain the secret operations of the laws of nature, which are known only to

or their wisdom, and their equity.  
 to our inspection; that man, who  
 transmit only a mortal constitution  
 the same laws, if his appetites, and  
 disordered by sin, the same tenden-  
 all those who spring from his loins:  
 ment of the parent, and, frequently,  
 d, we see renewed in his posterity.  
 to against the injustice of this order

## OF THE BENIGNITY OF THIS ORDINANCE.

Those who are unfriendly to our doctrine demand, where would be the benignity of the Creator, in calling into existence a whole race of beings, and, at the same time, subjecting their eternal destiny to the voluntary act of a frail, though innocent creature? And an *appearance* of severity it certainly would have, if it had not been his most merciful purpose, annulling the condition of the first covenant, now rendered impracticable by the Fall, to dispose the humbled and lost father of the race, and his whole offspring, immediately under the protection and grace of the Second Adam, and the blessings of a new covenant, established on *better promises*, enriched with more glorious hopes, and resting on a more perfect security in the righteousness of Christ. And it is not an improbable opinion of many wise and good men, that the condition of the human family, under this dispensation, is much to be preferred to that which would have existed under the most favourable operation of the first. The displays of the divine nature have been more glorious, the riches and consolations of the divine mercy have been more precious, the joys of eternal life more exalted, and triumphant. Yet, to this illustrious exhibition of divine grace the fall of human nature, in the unsearchable wisdom of God, became the necessary introduction. Its richest glory arises out of its deepest humiliation.

**OF THE OPINION THAT DEATH WAS DENOUNCED TO TAKE  
PLACE ON THE DAY OF THE FALL.**

Another interpretation of this awful sanction,—*In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, which is more literal than the former, and which limits the execution of the sentence to the day of the transgression, merits our particular consideration, at once, from its simplicity, and its obvious conformity to the letter of the law. On this interpretation, Adam, under his original covenant, could not possibly have had posterity. Nor is it probable that, if he had been permitted to live for a season, he could, without a *new covenant*, giving him the hope of life, have had any offspring, while precariously existing under the momentary, and overwhelming apprehensions of death. But the whole scene was changed by the promise of a Saviour, in these mysterious words, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, which hold out to our afflicted father the final destruction of the *power of evil*, and offer to his hopes the most illustrious displays of divine mercy and grace. Immediately we perceive the first fruits of this gracious promise upon our first parents; and Adam, in the hope of a numerous progeny, which was extinguished with the loss of his own existence, called the name of his wife, in the moment of his exultation, *Eve*, in the Hebrew language, *Chavah*; because now he was assured that she was to become the *mother of*

cc.—Though raised to better hopes, yet pos-  
 a depraved and fallen nature, he could im-  
 to his offspring. All, therefore, are born under  
 as much as, without a Mediator, and a new cove-  
 could have received existence, all who now are  
 come into the world, enter it under the protec-  
 of this gracious Saviour; and, accordingly we see them  
 of this gracious covenant, in the church, met  
 and blessings of the *righteousness of faith*.  
 and *immortality* are proposed to *all*, not, as un-  
 covenant with Adam, to perfect obedience;  
 a Mediator, to sincere repentance, and evange-

#### IMPORT OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE, AND THE TREE OF LIFE.

last inquiry, proposed under this head, was to ascer-  
 purpose and meaning of the *tree of the knowledge*  
*and evil, and the tree of life*. Of the former, little  
 can exist. The fruit of that tree was designed to  
 e test of the *obedience* of man. And its denomination  
 nifestly derived from its destination: for, Adam, who,  
 had been acquainted only with *good*, became, from  
 its fruit, most fatally sensible of *evil*. The act in-

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is this principle more explicitly stated under the article of *baptism*:



roduced into his soul the afflicting consciousness of guilt, and the fatal daring of disobedience, once become familiar, perverted all his powers, and emboldened his sinful passions to farther transgressions. It threw the principles of duty headlong from their throne, and raised to the forsaken seat, all the irregular affections, and violent impulses of a depraved nature. This moral death of the soul was, at the same time, conjoined with the decay of all the powers of the body, and the corruption of the principles of animal life. On the other hand, it is by no means an improbable conjecture, that the tree of life possessed a health giving, and renovating quality, which added a vital stimulus to the corporeal powers; but that the forbidden fruit, besides its intoxicating power, which has before been suggested, contained, likewise, a deleterious spirit which instantly diffused a slow consuming poison through all the veins, and introduced the principles of disease and death into the human frame.

Many respectable writers have believed that this life giving tree was placed in the garden as the symbol of immortality to this innocent pair, as long as they should persevere in their duty; and probably a sacramental sign of the steadfastness of the covenant, to be ever before their eyes, to encourage their joyful hopes, and to awaken their ardent devotion.

## OF THE INTRODUCTION OF SIN INTO THE WORKS OF GOD.

Before I proceed to treat of the consequences of the Fall, either upon the parents, or the entire family of the human race, it will not, I hope, be deemed improper to introduce a speculative question which, has been found to occupy, with much solicitude, the minds of men; and is often, by the enemies of revelation, made the occasion of casting reproach upon its doctrines. I introduce it, however, not with the presumption of being able satisfactorily to resolve to the minds of all, the difficulties with which it is embarrassed; but with the humbler hope of inducing un murmuring submission to the will of God, whose decrees transcend the investigations of reason.—Why did the infinite Creator, whose power and wisdom, can accomplish all his *will*, without encroaching on the peculiar prerogatives of human nature, permit the introduction of sin into his works? Why should moral and natural evil form a part of the system, conceived by the Infinite Mind, for the administration of this world? Or how could sin exist in the universe, in which we confess that all things depend solely upon his *will*, without imputing to him such an agency in the event as to palliate, at least, if not entirely excuse the transgression of the sinner?—It is doubtless gross impiety to ascribe iniquity to God, as its author, or to impute any indirect influence over the human mind to the Most Holy, inconsistent with the purity of his

themselves ; that evil is necessary to the perfection of the universe ; as necessary, to use their own similitude, as *shades to the beauty of a picture*. This fine maxim of the imagination, is certainly dependent on a theory of very questionable truth ; or rather is contradicted by the soundest dictates of reason.—Their great dogma, which solves to them all *difficulties*, in physics, and in morals, is, that all the good which can possibly exist in the universe, and the whole perfection, in both orders of being, which can possibly proceed from the wisdom and the power of the Omnipotent is to be seen in his works. What does not exist is impossible.—This principle is bringing back the absurd *Fate* of the Stoics, and subjecting the Deity himself to the chains of necessity.—I must be permitted to observe on this whole question, that it presents to our reason one of those inscrutable subjects, on which it is wise, in the present state, to repose submissively on the wisdom of God ; resolving what we cannot explain, into his sovereign will, and the unsearchable counsels of his understanding. Revelation, however, informs us that he will turn this disastrous event to subserve the noblest ends in the universe,—the illustration of his goodness, his mercy, and his justice, in the exaltation of his Son, so as to render the new creation more glorious than Eden.

## OF THE SERPENT AND THE TEMPTATION.

Of the duration of the state of innocence, no facts are presented to us from which any certain estimate can be formed. Nor have we any means of judging in what manner the temptation was addressed by the serpent, to our primitive mother. Many frivolous fancies have been uttered concerning the species of serpent, whose form the tempter assumed; all of them, probably, without sufficiently adverting to the effects of the curse on the whole creation, and on the change, particularly, which must have passed on the forms and qualities of the animal tribes.

That the whole history of this most important of human transactions, is according to the opinion of some respectable writers, a mere allegorical fable, depicting in figure this truth, that the fascinations of vice deceived and seduced our first parents, appears to have no support in the language in which the narration is conveyed to us. The images of hieroglyphic, out of which this divine fable is supposed to be constructed, could originally have been drawn only from actual types, that is, from historical facts. And the serpentine hieroglyphic of eloquence, wit, and cunning, used at first, by the Egyptian priests, and supposed to be here employed, has every appearance of being itself borrowed from the fact which took place in Paradise. From the same fact, the prince of

evil spirits, has received, in the holy scriptures, his figurative denomination of the *Old Serpent*; and, among the heathen, the emblematic wand of mercury seems to have had a similar origin. The denunciation pronounced upon that reptile, *upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat*, has, obviously, a reference to some transmutation passed upon his form, and his manner of moving and subsistence, designed by God to be emblematic of the humiliation, and the degraded state into which his arts had reduced the parents, and the whole race of man.

FRAGMENTS OF THIS HISTORY FOUND IN THE TRADITIONS  
AND FABLES OF ALL THE EARLIEST NA-  
TIONS OF ANTIQUITY

It is an inquiry which will naturally suggest itself both to the friends, and the enemies of revelation—have any vestiges of a fact so unspeakably important to human kind, been found among the historical or mythological monuments of the most ancient pagan nations? If true, would not some tradition of it have naturally been preserved in the fables of every people so lately descended from the common head of the race. And several eminent and learned writers have bestowed no small pains in comparing the traditions and mythological fables of antiquity with the Mosaic history, whence they have been thought to have derived a testimony of no inconsiderable authority to the authenticity and truth of the

sacred record. All who are in the least conversant with ancient learning, are familiar with the fables of the golden and the iron age, which are nothing more than the allegorical dress in which the poets have chosen to clothe the earliest history of mankind. The doctrine of the primitive innocence, and fall of man, the travellers, and philosophers of Greece received from Egypt, and the East, along with their arts and sciences almost with the first existence of the nation. In the Egyptian mythology, particularly, we recognize the original innocence of man in the happy reign of Osiris over the world. His fall is depicted in the ravages of Typhon, their great and wicked Demon, or principle of Evil. And, lastly, we discover the promise of a Saviour, in the prediction of the resurrection and eternal life of Osiris, when he will triumph over the power of evil, and restore universal peace and happiness to the world.\*

The Magians of Persia believed in their enigmatical system of the egg of the world, which, at first, was shining and transparent, till broken by Ahriman, the Power of Evil, when happiness became every where confounded with misery. I have formerly spoken of the doctrine of the ancient Bramins of India, and its striking similarity, in this particular, to the history of Moses. I have there also referred to the representations of the catholic missionaries, so long resident

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\* The travels of Cyrus, by the Chevalier Ramsay.

in the empire of China.\* And it merits particular observation, that the traditions of the most ancient nations, the higher they go up towards the origin of time, bear the stronger resemblance to the facts of the sacred history. Nor ought this to appear surprising, since all nations, as the scriptures assure us, have sprung from one common parent after the deluge. The nearer, therefore, they carry their history to its source, the more ought we to expect, what we actually find, some coincidence in its facts with those recorded in Moses. And those holy writings evidently lead us to the genuine fountain whence all their mythological streams have flowed, more or less pure or adulterated, in proportion as they approach, or recede from, the beginning of time. And so many striking, and undesigned resemblances afford a testimony of no slight value to the authenticity of the divine historian.

#### THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF THE FALL ON OUR FIRST PARENTS.

Before concluding this article, it will be requisite to consider the immediate effects of the Fall upon our first parents, as well as its consequent influence upon their whole posterity. On the former, it is manifest, from the testimony of the

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\* On the evidences of religion. The coincidences of the traditions of the ancient nations with the sacred history.

and being in such a state, that they could not, at all times, conceal the disgraceful effect, except by such an artifice as that to which they now had recourse. The sense of shame, in consequence of lustful emotion, where it is not utterly extinguished by the violence of desire, or the force of depraved habit, involuntarily arises at all the visible indications of this gross passion, and at every object, exciting to it, presented to the senses, or the fancy. And in this, as in other subjects, we recognise the force of nature in the new fallen pair.

#### OF THE REPENTANCE OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

Of the repentance of this unhappy pair after their lamentable fall, nothing is distinctly transmitted to us in the concise narration of Moses. But there is the strongest reason to presume that their penitence followed the promise given by God to console them in their affliction ;—that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, and thus destroy the Power of Evil ; delivering her offspring by this act, from the dominion of sin, and death. And, in the highest degree probable it is, that the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the midst of his righteous judgments on their transgression, still bestowed on them the most gracious and paternal care, in his provisions for their temporal comfort, and who, in their humbled state, still deigned to them his heavenly communications in the field, or at the



to the cries of their misery, and

these gloomy writers, who have dar-  
e afflicted parents, in the midst of  
e of their race, themselves perish-  
that Saviour who had been recent-  
rit even this notice of an uncharita-

corruption with which all men are now born into the world.” —The existence of a *depraved nature* in man has been made the subject of ardent, and too often acrimonious controversies in the christian church. The Socinians and even the Arminians, probably mistaking the true meaning and extent of the proposition which asserts the original sinfulness and depravity of human nature, deny that we inherit from Adam any evil except that of pain and death. These writers, indeed, confess the tendency of mankind to *moral wrong* in many of their earliest acts. Yet, they refuse to admit the federal, or representative character of our primitive parent in the *covenant of works*. But all the orthodox symbols and confessions, from the first ages, maintain that “the covenant was made with him, not only for himself, but for all his posterity, who, consequently, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression.”\* I must remark here, that those who believe that the penalty of the covenant was ordained to be inflicted on the day of the Fall, must use a language somewhat different, but the consequence becomes eventually the same, the inheritance by his offspring, of a constitution corrupted by the principles of death and sin. For this, as we have before seen, is an universal law of nature affecting the descent of posterity ;—the scion must partake of the stock.

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\* Every thing deserving attention on this subject, will be found in President Edwards on Original Sin, and his antagonist Dr. Taylor.

ing revealed to Adam, he, with his whole race were, at that instant, placed under the dispensation of mediatorial grace. And now, every infant is introduced into being, not on the terms which our degenerate father had forfeited, of life to the perfect ; but of pardon and grace to the penitent, bestowed through the Mediator. And, inasmuch as the most merciful Redeemer, immediately, on the *promise* being made to Adam, took the world under his protection and government, the gracious aids of his Holy Spirit, are now in various degrees, extended to all men ; but more especially to his chosen people of old, and since to his church, under both which dispensations, the precious seal of his covenant is appointed to be administered to all their infant seed, to assure them of this great salvation.\*

This, however, does not present to us the whole blessing of that form of the New Covenant confirmed to Adam in the mysterious promise, *The Seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head*, shall destroy his power, and defeat his machinations. To our imperfect nature, it has converted the *curse*, as far as relates to the evils of this life, its labors, and its pains, into a merciful dispensation ; a *corrector* of its calamities, still more than their *punishment*. The aches, the pains, and diseases incurred by the Fall, become salutary monitors of our guilty original, and serve to lead the soul to

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\* See this principle farther illustrated, under the head of the *seals of the covenant*.

nature displaying an unhappy force from the earliest years of childhood and infancy? Have we not, from our most remote remembrance, perceived within our hearts, the working of many impure desires and unhallowed passions? Is not the history of man, in a great measure, the history of his crimes? Does not the world present to us rather a prison destined for the punishment of the guilty, than a paradise, the delightful habitation of innocence? Does not the infant feel the pangs, and utter the cries of pain, from the moment of its birth? Do not pain and disease, though now sanctified to the penitent by the Redeemer, still pursue him, till they lay him in the grave? Do all these calamities indicate the state of an innocent being, under the government of a most merciful Creator? Or does not a strong impression again result from the whole, that man is fallen and guilty?

OF THE EXTENT OF ORIGINAL SIN, AND THE MODE OF ITS  
TRANSMISSION.

Two questions yet remain upon this subject, which merit the attention of the theological student. In the first place, to what extent is human nature corrupted?

Secondly, how is that sinful nature communicated, so as not to subject God most holy, to the impious charge of being the author of sin?

1. On the first, it is the decision of the word of God, and of the church, that the depravity of human nature pervades it in its whole extent. Its rational powers are perverted in their application, or rendered impotent through sinful tendency ; and all its moral faculties, in their habitual action, have become criminal, by the excess in their pursuits, by defect in their principles, or their motives, or by misapplication in their objects. The first moments of existence are certainly not chargeable with actual crimes, but with such perversion of nature from its original rectitude, that its earliest propensities, emotions, and affections, are directed to wrong ends, or to those that are lawful in a vicious degree. And, however the conduct of mankind may, in many parts of it, be beneficial to their fellow men, and, in so far, worthy of approbation, yet, in the sight of God, all acts are unholy in which the supreme desire of the soul in pursuing, and its supreme end in performing them, is not to render obedience, and glory to him from whom all existence is derived.

2. With regard to the second question, if we mean to ask how an impure and depraved nature may be imparted to the posterity of Adam without involving a deep reproach on the Author of our being ? It is sufficient to answer, as the succession of all animals is continued. The whole nature of the parent is imparted to the offspring. But in what manner this, or any of the works of creation is produced, is utterly beyond our knowledge. The *modus operandi* is the secret of God.

But to say, as some weak men have done, in the hope of avoiding the impiety of making God the author of a sinful act, that God formed the soul pure, but uniting it to a sinful, disordered, or merely animal body, it has, by this junction, become necessarily infected with sin, is certainly an errant absurdity of pious folly. As if it were less contrary to the purity of the divine nature to form a being innocent, and immediately subject it to a state of necessary infection, than to suffer the laws of the universe freely to operate, by which an impure effect must proceed from an impure cause—a sinful progeny from sinful parents. Of much more moment is it to us, saith Saint Augustine, to understand how we are delivered from sin by Jesus Christ, than to be able to explain in what manner we have derived it from Adam.

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# **OF FAITH.**

**ITS NATURE AND EFFICACY AS A MORAL PRINCIPLE,**

**AND**

**THE REASONABLENESS OF ITS HOLDING SUCH A DISTIN-  
GUISHED PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.**

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OF THE  
**NATURE OF FAITH;**

ITS EFFICACY AND EXCELLENCE AS A PRACTICAL PRINCIPLE OF HOLINESS, AND CONSEQUENTLY THE REASON-  
ABleness OF ITS POSSESSING SUCH A DISTINGUISHED PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.

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**H**AVING already considered faith as the condition of the Covenant of Grace, and incidentally spoken of the justification, adoption, and sanctification of the believer, as among the precious fruits of this covenant, I have, however, thought it necessary, on account of the high importance of these doctrines in the christian system, to treat of them with somewhat greater extent and precision. And, in the first place, of Faith, which, as it is the fundamental article of the gospel, has been attacked by the enemies of christianity with peculiar virulence, and with the most disingenuous sarcasm; insultingly presuming that it needs the support of faith, only in proportion as it is destitute of reason. The evidences on which our faith is sustained have been already discussed, as far as this compendious system would admit. And, on the most rigorous investigation, it will be found to rest on secure



order to his reconciliation ; or of penetrating the darkness which hangs over the everlasting destinies of mankind ; and since truth, and comfortable hope, on these subjects, must be purely the effect of revelation, faith is, with still more propriety, made the fundamental principle of the christian system. It is confessed that the peculiar and discriminating doctrines of christianity cannot rest on the discoveries of human reason. They must be received, if they are rationally received at all, upon the evidence of those omnipotent works performed by Jesus Christ, which identify him with the Author of all truth. We believe, not because he hath taught like the leader of a philosophic sect, in a chain of the most accurate and conclusive reasoning ; but because he hath made it evident, that, in his words, God himself, the Author of all truth, hath spoken. For, we can have no doubt of the presence of God in the midst of those astonishing displays of divine power, with which the Saviour hath invited the attention of the world ; nor of the veracity of that testimony, the truth of which the Almighty has deigned to confirm with his own seal. As it is the privilege of children to receive the lessons of duty and wisdom from the mouth of a wise parent, which they ought to admit with implicit reverence, before their minds are sufficiently mature to discern their foundations in the eternal principles of reason, so the disciple of Christ humbly learns, by faith, at the feet of his Redeemer, those truths which he could not otherwise receive, till the soul, ripened by the instructions of his grace and Spirit, shall

their various contents, those subjects are more peculiarly incorporated in the object of faith, which are most essentially conjoined with this idea of divine mercy:—For example,—the fallen and guilty state of human nature,—the perfect atonement for sin made by our Lord Jesus Christ,—the infinite greatness, holiness, justice, goodness, sovereignty, and truth of God,—the beauty and excellence of the law of holiness,—and the promise of eternal life to the penitent. On other subjects opinions may be more various, ideas may be more indefinite and obscure : but on these, belief ought to be precise, clear, strong.

In stating the nature of faith, however, a distinction is to be made between that belief which has a reference merely to the integrity and veracity of the prophet, the apostle, or the messenger of Heaven, and that which respects also the nature, importance, and excellence of the doctrines which these divine instructors communicate. Let me illustrate my meaning by a familiar example.—We may possess perfect confidence in the wisdom of an eminent moralist, or admire the talents of a fine writer, who points out, with all the truth of criticism, the beauties of any classic work ; but for want of having the reason properly cultivated by education, we may not perceive the soundness of his remarks, or the accuracy of his reflections ; or, through deficiency of taste, may not be able to discern the beauty of his examples, nor the delicacy of his illustrations. The principles and doctrines

of the one, or the delicate beauties of the other, cannot be strictly said to be objects of our belief; because the former are not justly apprehended, nor are the latter truly discerned, requiring for this purpose, the delicacy of a refined taste, and cultivated understanding.—To apply these remarks.—A genuine, practical, and operative faith in the gospel, which is that alone after which we seek, consists, not merely, in acknowledging the scriptures to be the word of God, or in confessing the divine authority, and heavenly mission of the apostles, the prophets, or of Christ himself, all which may be nothing more than an hereditary opinion, or pious prejudice derived from education: but it implies, as still more essential to it, a clear perception of the spiritual nature, and discernment of the divine excellence and beauty of the doctrines which they teach, especially as they regard the glory of God, the system of our redemption, and the duties and immortal hopes of man; and I must add, still further, a profound persuasion, which is a necessary consequence of the former, not only of their truth, but of their infinite importance to our everlasting peace and happiness. These doctrines, therefore, are not received with genuine faith, but in proportion as their true nature, as far as they are within the comprehension of the human mind, is clearly understood; and clearly understood they cannot be but in proportion as the heart discerns their spiritual excellence, and, with a holy and divine taste, relishes their spiritual beauty;—for the *excellence* of virtue, the *beauty* of holi-

ness, is part of its idea.—Here then we begin to perceive the moral and sanctifying influence of a sincere faith ; for what the heart thus understands and loves, discerning its supreme excellence, must govern the practice. The believer perceiving, by this gracious principle, the *perfection* of these doctrines, or, in the language of the scriptures, *the beauty of holiness*, is led, by the sweet attraction of a renewed taste, to *delight in the law of God after the inward man*.

THE DEPENDENCE OF SAVING FAITH ON THE GOOD  
DISPOSITIONS OF THE HEART.

Here also we discern, which is my next observation, the dependence of faith upon, or its necessary connexion with the good dispositions of the heart.—By the understanding we judge of speculative truth. And many writers have maintained that this power of the mind alone is employed in a rational and consistent faith. But it ought always to be remembered that the convictions of the understanding are greatly influenced, on all moral subjects, by the state of the affections. It is the heart alone, profoundly touched by the Spirit of grace, which creates those lively and affecting conceptions of the beauty and excellence of divine things, which, together with the conclusions of reason, form the essence of a practical faith the active and operative principle of a holy life. Hence the apostle hath said ; “ with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” And Philip repli-

ed to one asking the condition of baptism.—If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.

Will it be asked if we do not, by this representation, require the regeneration of the heart, or the formation in the soul of a divine and holy taste of truth, as a prerequisite to faith, of which, change, however, faith is acknowledged to be the only genuine principle? By no means. Degenerate as human nature is, it so far possesses ideas of moral excellence, and *consents to the law of God that it is good*, as under the gracious influences of the Divine Spirit, co-operating with his holy word, to present to that heavenly Teacher a sufficient foundation for an understanding faith in its incipient state. And when once this holy illumination, this ~~divine~~ taste exists in the weakest degree, it prepares the soul, under the culture of the same word, and the continued influence of the same Spirit, to receive every doctrine of the gospel with a fuller conviction, to perceive increasing beauties in the system of grace, and to feel, with augmented force the obligation of the whole law of holiness. There exists a strong analogy between the progress, and effects of education whether moral or scientific, and the influence of this divine culture on the mind, under the teachings of the Holy Spirit. The mind begins her course blind to the beauties of truth, and averse to the constraints of a necessary discipline; but the light which is gradually shed into the mind improves, both the judgment, and the taste, and con-

tributes, by a fine and almost imperceptible influence, to ameliorate the heart. We cannot pronounce that a happy and formed taste must precede the power of perceiving the beauty or the light of virtue, or of science in their incipient state: nor can we say, on the other hand, that the perception of the beauty of virtue must precede the formation of a virtuous taste. They are simultaneously cultivated, and, by a mutual influence, produce their effects on each other by an insensible reciprocation of ideas and feelings, which is too fine to be marked in language; but does not fail to be perceived by all who are accustomed to attend with precision to the operations of their own minds.

**THE RETRIBUTIONS OF ETERNITY INCLUDED IN THE IDEA  
OF AN OPERATIVE AND EFFICIENT FAITH.**

In speaking of faith as an efficient principle of sanctification, it is requisite, besides the spiritual understanding of the doctrines of the gospel, and the divine taste of their excellence and beauty which it implies, to include also in its idea, those powerful motives of holiness and obedience which it derives from celestial and eternal things. In the language of the apostle, "it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." It penetrates the veil which conceals them from mortal eyes, and presents them to the devout mind, as far as the human faculties are susceptible of these sublime ideas, with a transcendent, and

### THE EFFICACY OF FAITH.

We conclude, therefore, with the justest reason, that no moral system, or institute of religion, has ever laid such a foundation for purity of heart, and sanctity of life, as the christian economy, resting, as it does, on the doctrine of a sincere faith in the Redeemer of the world. If we assemble all the objects of faith in one view, and receive them as the infallible truths of God, not with a vague, unmeaning assent, the fruit merely of custom and example, but with a profound conviction, arising from reflection, from examination, from the holy influence of prayer, aided by the concurrent illumination of the Eternal Spirit, I may ask, with confidence, what motives drawn from any other source, can be compared with those derived from the gospel, for the purity of their influence, and their persuasive power on the heart?

### THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS PRINCIPLE AS A PRACTICAL BASIS OF RELIGION.

The enemies of the gospel profess to be offended at its resting so much on the doctrine of faith; insinuating that the whole is merely an address to the credulity of mankind, in which believing its pretensions is made a substitute for piety and morality.—The evidences of our holy religion, proposed in the introduction of this treatise, are a sufficient reply

so much disputation, and are liable, in their application, to so many exceptions and modifications, in favour of each man's inclinations or interests, that they form a most uncertain and falacious rule of duty. It is, besides, a rule as feeble in its authority, as it is defective in its prescriptions, being liable to be changed, or set aside, by every caprice of self-love, or impulse of misguided passion. But every thing in the discipline of Christ, is clear and luminous as the eternal laws of truth from which it emanates. Here are no feebling doubts, no uncertain reasonings which make the law too often speak the language of a corrupted heart.—Where, then, can be found, in all the systems of human wisdom, such a basis of morality as in that faith which is the practical principle of the gospel of Christ? Has any philosophy, the candid unbeliever himself being judge, ever taught so pure and excellent a doctrine, derived it from so sublime a source, enjoined it by sanctions so weighty and important, or added to it the force of obligations, and the persuasion of motives, so transcendent in their nature, and fitted to interest all the best powers of the soul?—Such are the moral effects of a genuine faith in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, in the esteem of every candid and pious mind, will repel all the contemptuous sneers of infidelity, and vindicate the high place which it holds in the christian dispensation. *It works by love, and purifies the heart.* It is the commencement of that pure and heavenly spirit, which, unfold-



ed and cherished in the regions of immortal love, will be the consummation of *that grace wherein we now stand.*

#### OTHER DEFINITIONS OF FAITH.

Before dismissing this branch of the subject, let me take notice of some definitions, or representations of this grace, confessedly just, but the coincidence of which with the views hitherto presented to you, may not immediately appear. Sometimes it is characterised in the holy scriptures by one of its principal acts.—*Abraham* is said to have *believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* This consequence could have flowed only from his having trusted implicitly in the divine promise, in opposition to the most untoward events, and to appearances that might have discouraged the strongest hopes. Such confidence in the covenanted promise of God could have existed only in a heart prepared to receive, with submissive duty, every part of his declared will.

Sometimes it is designated by one of its principal objects ; as in the command of the apostle to the jailor *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.* In another circumstance, the same great founder of the christian faith, descending to an idea still more particular, says ; “ If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ is so intimately involved with the accomplishment of the atonement, and with the truth of all the promises and hopes of christianity, that sincerely to receive this glorious truth in all its relations and consequences, is to embrace the whole gospel.

On the other hand, the pious and learned compilers of the confession and catechism of the presbyterian church have chosen to describe it by one of its essential and inseparable consequences; *receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation*. Desiring to give some single criterion of this grace which would be least liable to be mistaken by a believer himself in judging of his own spiritual state, they have fixed on this self-renunciation, and this absolute dependence of the penitent sinner on the grace and merits of the Saviour, as one that is most certain, because one to which the pride, and self-complacency of man most reluctantly submits: one to which he never does submit, till the sense of his own unworthiness and guilt,—of the purity, holiness, and justice of the divine law,—of the grace of the Redeemer, and the all-sufficiency of his righteousness for the satisfaction of the violated law,—in a word, till the whole gospel has taken full possession of his soul.

BLANCES OF FAITH.

The subject of faith present to us  
balances of this grace, which it is of  
to discriminate from the genuine  
those which chiefly require no no-  
a historical faith, and a temporary  
that assent which is yield-  
educt-

On the other hand, that which is improperly called a *temporary faith*, is usually nothing more than an occasional, and sometimes constitutional susceptibility of heart on religious subjects, excited by a variety of concurrent circumstances ; and, like other transient emotions, passing away without fruit, or any radical change of character. In those moments of religious feeling, the gospel is regarded rather as a system of beneficence to the creature, than of mercy and grace to the sinner. It is prone to rejoice in the ideas of the divine benignity ; and often melts with the sympathetic recollections of the Saviour's sufferings and love, without entering deeply into the depravity of our nature, and, from the heart, abhorring its corruptions. It perceives the triumphs, not the humility of religion. The consequence is, that not duly sensible of the evil of sin, and penetrated with the sentiments of repentance, it does not properly regard the righteousness of Christ as forming the sole meritorious title of our acceptance with God. When the passions and temptations of sin are, from any cause suspended, mistaking this for the change of heart required in the gospel, it may perceive an elevated joy in the hopes of eternal life and happiness ; but, having no root of holiness in itself, when persecution, or shame, or the sacrifice of interest or of pleasure is to be encountered for the sake of the word, *bye and bye it is offended* ; or, when the transient fit of religious sensibility has passed off, it leaves nothing behind it but the passions of the world.

**This great and practical principle of duty is attempted, by different writers, to be analyzed into various acts concurring to constitute its essence ; such as repentance for sin—a desire to glorify God through Jesus Christ—a love of divine things—hungering and thirsting after righteousness—receiving and resting upon Christ for justification, sanctification, and complete redemption. These acts form an injudicious analysis of the grace of faith. They are natural consequences resulting from the devout and humble state of the mind in the exercise of faith ; but are not more peculiarly allied to this grace than to other principles of the divine life. There is, however, a discrimination in this act, according to its degrees of clearness and strength, into a *weak faith* and a *strong faith*, which has a real foundation in the experience of good men. And the holy apostle evidently justifies the distinction, speaking of some of his converts as being yet only *babes* in Christ. And, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians, exulting in the faith of that church as *growing exceedingly* ; by which language he strongly marks a progression in this grace. His followers at Rome he exhorts *not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.***

## IN THE FIRST PLACE, OF A WEAK FAITH.

This title implies a certain feebleness in the impressions which divine truth makes upon the mind, so that it does not habitually yield that clear apprehension of its nature, and firm persuasion of its glorious reality, which raises the believer, at all times, above the seductive influence of the world, and gives him that lively sense of his interest in the atonement and intercession of Christ which contributes, in the highest degree, to his comfort in the divine life, and to the most useful discharge of his various duties. This feeble habit of religious feeling, may arise from different causes, which will naturally display themselves in proportionally different effects upon the character and manners. Sometimes it springs from a natural imbecility of mind in conceiving its ideas ; and, at other times, from possessing only narrow views, and very limited opportunities of information. The consequence of which, usually, is an unhappy mixture of low and superstitious ideas and practices with the better principles of religion. Not unfrequently, it is derived from certain errors in principle, which occasion the forms, and the external duties of religion to be too much, or too little regarded ; either absorbing the heart in its ceremonial, or, by a pretended superiority to outward form, withdrawing from the weakness of human nature the aids which have always been found necessary for preserving alive the warmth and vigor of pious af-

darkness of their minds, discern their own privilege to appropriate the gracious promise of the covenant to themselves. It is not of the mercy, or the promise of God, that they entertain any doubt ; but of themselves. They lose the comforts of a composed and settled state of piety and devotion ; and that time is often spent in gloomy retreat, and anxious conflicts with their own hearts, which would be better employed in active duty. Active duty is the best mean of removing the doubts of humble piety, by giving to the true believer the best evidences of a regenerate and sanctified principle of action. In retirement, the mind often broods over its own evils, and increases the gloom which induces it to court seclusion from the world. There are two acts, however, by which the sincerity of the weakest faith may be demonstrated. The one is humility, under a deep sense of the evil of sin, and of the imperfection of our own righteousness, producing unceasing desire of an interest in the redemption purchased by Christ Jesus. The other is an earnest endeavor to render that interest clear to the heart, by the faithful discharge of every duty, and a constant study to glorify God by holiness of living, and universal obedience to his will. Where these characters exist in sincerity, faith, although it may be feeble, is still genuine, and the believer may be truly an heir of eternal life ; although, dubious and uncertain of his relation to Christ, his mind may be often covered with darkness and perplexity.

*to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.* It is the same which, in another place, he calls *the full assurance of faith*. To it, likewise, the prophet Isaiah seems to allude, in an expression that deserves to be explained—*Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me*; alluding evidently to the privilege which certain criminals enjoyed of fleeing, and taking hold of the horns, which were the *strength* of the altar, in order to escape the stroke of vengeance or of justice. The obvious interpretation of which language is—let him, with confidence, trust my power to save, and therein enjoy the security of my protection.

There is, indeed, a confidence of salvation, and a joy arising out of this assurance which the hypocrite may taste as well as the believer, and, sometimes, in a higher degree. But these affections may be discriminated from each other, by considering the necessary effects, and certain fruits, of a genuine faith. Believing the entire corruption of our nature, it produces the deepest humiliation before God. The joy of the hypocrite, on the other hand, begets an exultation of heart, in which little of the true humility of repentance is to be found. To the believer, the goodness and mercy of God, to a sinner so unworthy, occasions the profoundest self-abasement; in the hypocrite it creates an unreasonable estimation of himself, and a pharisaic self-complacency in the idea that he is better than others. The one, although his own happi-



*lively perception of the beauty of holiness ; in an ardent devotion and obedience to its laws ; in an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the mercies of redemption ; and, under the deep and affecting impressions of the whole, in a warm, extended, and increasing benevolence to mankind.*

#### OF THE AUTHOR OF REGENERATION.

The holy scriptures in speaking of this blessed change, ever represent the Holy Spirit as its immediate Author, by his illuminating influence on the understanding, and the heart. A peculiar clearness of perception, is imparted to the believer's apprehension of divine things, and all the moral sensations of the soul, if this language may be employed, are exalted to a much higher tone of sensibility. In this understanding the mind is enlightened, not so much through the intellect, as the heart ; but in the whole there is an ineffable understanding of divine truth, in proportion to the natural vigor of the mind, combined with a warmth and glow of devout affection unknown to the natural man. They mutually communicate their light and heat, till the whole soul is dissolved in an enlightened and holy love. Human cultivation is capable of accomplishing much in the amelioration of the manners and dispositions of the young ; so that every good man, beholding them with the eyes with which our Saviour regarded the amiable youth in the gospel, shall love them ; but it is utterly incompetent to producing that mighty moral change implied in *regeneration*. The most ingenious

powers of human nature, raised to their highest refinement by the force of the most judicious culture, still fall far short of the genuine *clarity* of the gospel. "That which is born of the flesh," saith our Saviour, "is flesh; but that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again." And the apostle Peter pronounces believers "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, and sanctification of the Spirit." St. Paul also uses the following impressive language—"but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The Spirit of God is indeed the primary and effectual agent in the regeneration of the soul; not properly by a *creative* act, or any immediate energy exerted upon it independent of the appointed means of grace, as the language of some writers would lead us to conceive; but by means, which, under his influence and direction, are peculiarly adapted to the end; especially by his holy word, and the instituted ordinances of his grace. The Holy Spirit, in the ordinary government of the church, never works, except by the instrumentality and co-action of instructions, or providential dispensations which are naturally calculated, in the moral structure of the world, to inform the reason, and to touch the heart. For this purpose, he has instituted the reading and preaching of his word, the administration of his most holy sacraments, and the habitual use of humble and fervent prayer to the Father of all mercy and grace; and, in subserviency to the same design, he di-

less man, behind his shield, from the dart of an enemy. These may form agreeable images in eloquent discourse, but do not explain the subject to the understanding. The efficacy of faith does not arise from any natural, or necessary virtue in this act of the mind to merit, or procure the blessing, but from the good pleasure of God, and the merciful constitution of the covenant of grace.—To render the subject more obvious, I lay down the following propositions. God infinitely merciful delights not in the misery of the offender. His supreme felicity consists in imparting happiness to all who can be made to enjoy it in consistency with the holy perfections of his nature, or, in other words, with the eternal and necessary laws of the moral universe. Having been pleased that the indispensable claims of his justice should be satisfied by the sacrifice of the cross, he now only wants a fit subject of his mercy, most freely to bestow it. Faith possesses this virtue, that, by the belief of the gracious truths, and promises of the gospel, it becomes, the most efficient principle of the regeneration and sanctification of our nature. The proper efficacy of faith then is, that it prepares the soul to be a fit recipient of those blessings which the infinite benevolence of the Deity is ever willing to confer on those who know how to value them, and are qualified to enjoy them. All the mercies of the gospel are transferred to the believer through Jesus Christ, through whom it has become just in God to justify the sinner. Such being the constitution of the covenant of grace,

*new covenant* in his favour? 2. As man is utterly unable to offer an atonement adequate to the demerit of sin, is vicarious satisfaction, in the person of another, either possible, or just in itself, or useful in the administration of the divine government over mankind? 3. Could satisfaction offered by any being less than a divine person, be accepted in the room of the sinner?

#### OF THE NECESSITY OF ATONEMENT.

There are writers who affirm that Almighty God might, by an act of sovereignty, have mercifully dispensed with any satisfaction for sin, and freely forgiven the offender, on his sincere repentance.—What God might, in sovereignty, have done, or could not, in consistency with the laws of eternal justice, do, seems impossible to be wisely and safely determined by us, and cannot be decided without presumption. We are infinitely more concerned to understand what God hath actually done, and, from the fact, to pronounce upon its justice, and utility. I may, however, be permitted to observe, that this opinion seems to be founded on very inadequate apprehensions of the necessary nature, and the inflexible claims of his holiness. And there are many important considerations which render it reasonable to believe that the punishment of the sinner, or a vicarious satisfaction to the justice of the law, in the person of a mediator, in all respects competent to this offering, was an indispensable require-

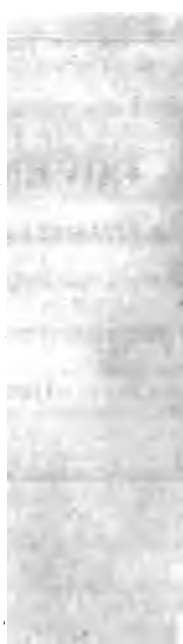
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**OF THE**  
**COVENANT OF GRACE.**  
**OF VICARIOUS SUBSTITUTION, AND ATONEMENT ;**  
**AND**  
**OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COVENANT—ITS PROM-**  
**ISES, AND ITS CONDITIONS.**

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being accountable to any superior ; likewise, whether he be perfectly competent to the undertaking, so that, from the intrinsic merit and dignity of his act, it may subserve all the wise and benevolent purposes of the law ; whether, also, in assuming this part, he be not lost to the universal interests of society, so that no gain to the great public of nature accrue from the substitution ; and, finally, whether the party, chiefly offended, be pleased and willing to accept the substitute in the room of the original offender.\*

If all these facts are fully ascertained, and these conditions strictly exacted, vicarious satisfaction appears to be entirely consistent with the principles of the soundest reason. If the substitute be free to dispose of his own person, and willing to undertake this benevolent office, the rights of justice cannot be impaired, nor the general interest injured by the exchange. Perhaps the sanction of the law appears more awful, and is rendered more effectual, when the penalty is, without abatement, exacted of the surety, than when claimed of the principal himself. An example in ancient history has been often appealed to, as illustrating this point with particular force. The legislator of the Locrians had enacted a law that any man convicted of adultery, should be punished with the loss of both his eyes. His own son happened to be the first criminal condemned on this statute. The father, mingling

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\* Dr. Witherspoon's Lectures on the Covenant of Grace.

the righteous severity of the judge with the compassion of the parent, decreed that his son should lose one of his eyes, and that, for the other which justice required, he himself would lose one, in order perfectly to satisfy the requisition of the law. Every man, who is acquainted with the feelings of a parent, and the self-love of human nature, must pronounce this act the strongest proof that could be given to the nation, of the inexorable justice of the legislator. It is obvious that such a vicarious substitution must have had a more useful influence on the public morals, than the suffering of the full penalty by the culprit in his own person. On the same clear and acknowledged sentiment in the human breast, the substitution of the Son of God, in the room of our sinful nature, was the most effectual sanction of the divine law which could have been exhibited to the universe.

Besides the obvious consistency of this doctrine with the principles of reason and of public justice, it is explicitly declared throughout the sacred scriptures, in the strongest and most unequivocal terms, to be, at once, the truth of God, and the only hope of man. The term *satisfaction*, indeed, is technical, and employed chiefly by modern divines, for the convenience of their systematic arrangements. But every idea included in the full and most comprehensive meaning of the word, is taught in the scriptures in the plainest language, and illustrated by the most affecting images. Under the ancient institution, on the great day of atonement, and even at



the daily sacrifices, certain men were appointed to represent the people of Israel, and to lay their hands upon the head of the victim, confessing the sins of the nation. This grave and serious action can have no reasonable interpretation but as a vicarious substitution of the sacrifice in the room of the offender, and a typical transfer of guilt from him to the victim. The same idea is connected with that office of religion wherein the priests of Israel sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon the horns of the altar, sanctifying, by that act, both the sacrifice and the altar; in allusion to which holy rite the blood of Christ is called *the blood of sprinkling*, purifying all things covered by its sacred efficacy. The language of the prophet is peculiarly forcible. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. When he shall give his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed—he shall prolong his days—and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." If, however, there were any obscurity in the type, and the figured language of the prophecy, the same truth is taught under the simplicity of the evangelic dispensation, in a style that can hardly leave any doubt in a fair and candid mind. Let me appeal to a few passages only, as an example of a great part of the sacred volume. Of the church, and of every individual believer, it is said, "they have been bought with a price. Redeemed not with corruptible things, such as silver, and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

**“This is my blood,” saith Christ of himself, “shed for many, for the remission of sins. He gave himself a ransom for all.” And the triumphant ascription of the whole church is, “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood!”** The arts of criticism have been employed, with great industry, to give these and similar expressions a remote, and feeble, and circuitous interpretation. But every reader must be sensible of the effort that appears to accommodate the language to a favourite theory, and the little resemblance which, under this disguise, it bears to the plainness and simplicity of the gospel. The obvious meaning of the terms, on the other hand, presents to the mind, on their first impression, the doctrine of the atonement. From the preceding illustrations and reflections, we evidently perceive the principle of vicarious satisfaction established by the explicit and unequivocal testimony of the word of God, as it had before been vindicated by the clear decisions of reason.

**THAT IT IS REQUISITE THAT SATISFACTION BE MADE BY  
A DIVINE PERSON.**

A third question still remains upon this subject, which, from its nature, and its consequences, is of the highest importance:—Could any satisfaction for the sin of human nature, less than that offered by a divine person, be accepted by the justice of God? From the whole tenor of the sacred

writings, it appears that an atoning sacrifice of infinite value is the indispensable requisition of eternal justice.

But there is something so awful, and so profoundly humbling to the soul in this consideration, that various evasions have been resorted to for the purpose of weakening the impression. It is asked whether some superior order of created spirits may not be so far exalted above human nature, as to be able by obedience and suffering to offer ample satisfaction to the righteousness of the offended law. To this inquiry it may most justly be replied, that no created being can be so far raised in nature as to make the smallest approximation to Deity ; or to be capable of offering an atonement for sin that shall cover, in any degree, the demerit of its guilt. Any finite being must, for this purpose, be liable to the suffering of eternal pains ; a sacrifice that could contribute nothing to the illustration of the mercy of our heavenly Father. Besides, is not every created being under the highest natural obligations to do, or suffer whatever he shall understand the glory of God, and the general interests of charity and benevolence require ; and if it were possible that the most exalted creature could have redeemed mankind, and glorified God, by any temporary sufferings, this sacrifice would, in the nature of things, have been an original and indispensable duty ; and the antecedent obligation would have deprived the offering of all *imputable* merit, which can reside only in the act of a free and independent being. But the *fact* of the appoint-

Christ, the *forgiveness of sins that are past*, imparting, at the same time, the spirit of sanctification to renew and perfect his nature, and finally, to bring him to the possession of eternal life ; which mercies the believer accepting with an humble and sincere faith, that purifies the heart, the act assumes the character and form of a covenant. But as there is an infinite distance between God most holy, and a sinful worm of the dust ; and as the whole transaction is a free gift, entirely gratuitous on the part of God, to style it a *covenant* is the language of divine condescension. Yet this is the gracious form of words employed by God himself. In the sacred scriptures it is denominated a *covenant of peace* ; and mercifully announced as a *new covenant*, to distinguish it from the *covenant of works*, and the covenant of Sinai. And, finally, it is declared to be an *everlasting covenant*, as the characteristic distinction between it and every temporary institution established by God with his people.

On the preceding considerations, I prefer another definition, warranted by the best writers, more appropriate and descriptive of the genuine nature of this covenant. It is that of a free and gratuitous *promise* from the Father of Mercies, to *all* who receive the blessing with penitent faith, of the pardon of sin through the atonement of the Redeemer, accompanied with the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, to lead them by the grace of holy living, to *life and immortality*, all which merciful propositions the believer sincerely ac-

whole phrase, however, of the *covenant of grace*, though justified by the language of scripture, is technical, inasmuch as many others have been, for the convenience of systematic arrangement.

#### MISTAKEN VIEW OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

From the imbecility of the human mind, and the different notions entertained by men of the same subject, we are not only, and unhappily met by controversy in theology, but also in other sciences. Those writers who, from their aversion to considering the observance of the moral law as any condition of the covenant of our salvation, and *Antinomians*, maintain this peculiar opinion, that the Covenant of Grace is not made with believers through the mediation of Christ; but has been established, from all eternity, with Christ in the name of all believers. The Father, Deity, before the foundation of the world, entered into a covenant with the Son, to give him a certain number out of the fallen human race, to be called, sanctified and saved by him upon his agreeing to assume human nature, and make atonement for their sins by his death. Founded on this supposed transaction between the eternal persons of the Godhead, they affirm the sole condition of the Covenant of Grace to be, not the obedience and faith of the believer, but the righteousness of Christ, making the believer a mere passive object of mercy, and not responsible for any of his sins past,

*Christ having assumed the responsibility, and perfectly satisfied the law for them.* Many other absurdities, not less gross and palpable, naturally growing out of their principles, are found in their writings, which some ingenious men have thought they find means of explaining in consistency with good morals. For this bold irreverence of the imagination some expressions of the sacred writings have given a very slender pretence indeed. "I have set my king," saith the Psalmist, "upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, Ps. ii. 6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire. Then said I, lo! I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God." Ps. xl. 6. And Isaiah, in a fine poetic rhapsody, has sung in the following strains;—"Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth! I have put my spirit upon him. He shall bring forth judgment to the gentiles. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness; I will hold thine hand, and keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the gentiles—to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and those that sit in darkness out of the prison house. Surely a man must have strong attachments to a system, and a most oblique facility of interpreting the scriptures, who can find the Covenant of Redemption in such poetical and

**OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE IN  
ITS PROMISES AND CONDITIONS.**

In the constitution of the Covenant of Grace the primary and essential principle which distinguishes it from the abrogated covenant with Adam is, that all its blessings are the effects of the free and unmerited mercy of Heaven. Man, having incurred, from the justice of his offended Creator, absolute and eternal condemnation, the whole plan of his recovery—his present mercies, and his eternal hopes are simply and entirely of grace; not the effect of obedience to the prescriptions of a law, but the result of the mere favour of God. For this end the system of redemption was instituted by Jehovah himself, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who should, by his obedience, satisfy the holy requisitions of his law, and by his sufferings, vindicate the righteous claims of his justice. On this foundation of obedience and suffering, Christ becomes the author of eternal life to all who believe in his name. And the whole redemption of mankind is exhibited to us in the sacred writings, as the fruit of the freest mercy, and the effect simply of the benignity of God most holy, to the race of man. *It is of faith*, saith the apostle, *that it might be of grace*, Rom. iv. 16. And the Evangelist affirms that *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*—This covenant is establish-

## 1. OF THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOUR.

In the arrangement of the blessings of the covenant, the promise of a Saviour justly stands in the first place ; because it was the first made to our afflicted father, after his fatal delinquency. It is likewise that primary gift on which all the rest depend. And it affords the first ray of consolation and hope to a soul under the conviction of sin. This distinguished and leading promise, therefore, embraces the complete atonement of sin by the sacrifice of Christ. It points to Christ as the fountain of every mercy to mankind, and the channel through which they are conveyed to his people. He is the great and comprehensive *promise made of God unto the fathers*, embracing in itself all the blessings of the gospel. He is *the hope* which the ancient church of Israel waited for : and, a still more glorious distinction—*He is the desire of all nations* ; for his propitiatory sacrifice, even when unknown, is the foundation of acceptance to every true penitent among the Gentiles, as it was to the saints anterior to the patriarch Abraham. He is, in one word, *the salvation of God*.

## 2. OF THE FREE AND FULL PARDON OF SIN.

The second promise of the covenant, as they have been just arranged, is the free and full pardon of sin to those who humbly and penitently seek this mercy through Jesus



On this subject an injudicious controversy has been raised on the following question, as men, like gladiators, to shew their intellectual skill, are often prone to contention on the slightest occasion of difference ; whether Christ has died for all men ? or only for an elected number ? Those who arrange themselves in the ranks of the latter insist that, if, on the principles of their antagonists, we say that Christ has died *for* all men, we make his death in vain to the greater number of those for whom it was offered. The former, with, perhaps, greater justice, affirm, that, if he hath died only for a select-ed number, the rest of mankind are necessarily excluded from the possibility of salvation, and, therefore the offer of the gospel to them is impiously imputing to God a duplicity in his transactions with the weakness of human nature, so much the more unworthy of his infinite goodness that it would be insulting the miserable, with ostensible but fallacious offers of mercy. Neither of these parties intend the consequences imputed to them by their rivals, and which their own terms literally taken, imply. The forms of expression, on both sides, are imperfectly calculated to convey accurate conceptions of their respective principles. And it would be more consistent with the spirit of the gospel, and with common sense, and, probably, with their own intentions to say, that the death of Christ was designed generally to make atonement *for sin* to the justice of God, so that *God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth*, and that indiscriminate offer of pardon to sinners might be fairly and ingenuously

hearts ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. And in Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 27, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean. From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." But, it is the constant testimony of the holy scriptures, not only that repentance and faith, but that every pious disposition in the believer proceeds from the operation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is, that all the graces of the christian life are denominated *the fruits of the Spirit*.

The chief question which remains on this part of the subject, and which, indeed, affects the whole doctrine of the agency of the Spirit, is, whether at any time he operates by immediate influx on the heart, as in creation, independently of the divine word, the ordinances of the church, or those means continually occurring in the course of providence, or in the transient reflexions, and glancings of the mind, calculated to awaken pious thought, to inflame holy desire, or touch the devout sensibilities of the soul ? or whether he does not always, and exclusively, operate by those scriptural, rational, natural, or appointed means of instruction and grace, or those secret suggestions arising out of them, which are fitted to inform the reason, and affect the heart ? I am disposed to believe that he always works by natural means, and

which start aside from this order, according to the dreams of enthusiasts ; and although we cannot always trace the fine relations of actions with their motives, of ends with the means which lead to them, yet, in every case the moral means are intimately conjoined with their end. And, in no instance, does the Holy Spirit, more than the Sovereign Author of nature, act upon the human mind, or produce any effect independently of the means naturally connected with it, and fitted to influence it, in the moral structure of the universe.

#### 4. OF THE PROMISE OF THE FAVOUR OF GOD, AND ITS HAPPY FRUITS IN THIS LIFE.

In the series of promises entering into this gracious transaction, I have mentioned, next, the favour of God, with all its happy fruits in the present life ; including the constant protection and care of his holy providence over those who place their undivided trust in him, and his benediction upon them as his children and people in covenant. I shall not proceed to particular details under this promise ; they will be obvious to those immediately concerned in its accomplishment ; it will be sufficient to refer the serious mind to the general grounds of the believer's confidence. " Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate ; and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty,"—2 Cor. vi. 17. Here is the sure foundation of their support under the various afflictions

of life, and the steadfast ground of their hope that, in the issue, all their trials will be rendered blessings to them, and be sanctified to their use. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called, according to his purpose. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

#### 5. OF THE FINAL BLESSING AND PROMISE OF THE COVENANT.

The conclusion and consummation of all the gracious purposes of God, secured by the New Covenant, to his believing and obedient children, is eternal life. It is the peculiar glory of the gospel that, in it, *life and immortality are brought to light* to those who, by their relation to their original parent, were the hopeless heirs of death. It is impossible to know what would have been the felicity of life, or the perfection to which human nature would have attained in it, in consequence of the obedience of Adam. But it is justly to be presumed that the immortality obtained by Christ, for all who are redeemed from the earth by his blood, exalts the believer to a much higher degree of glory and of happiness. For, "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality."

Having thus shortly unfolded this comprehensive concatenation of promises constituting the Covenant of Grace, it may perhaps, be demanded, if it be useful in the public instructions of the church, to observe this order of arrangement?— I regard it, certainly, as not without its benefit, for the clearer illustration of the gracious system of the gospel; and for communicating precision and distinctness to the conceptions of the christian in contemplating that institution of mercy under which we now exist. It is that order in which its blessings naturally offer themselves to the heart of the believer for the encouragement and consolation of his faith, and to the mind of the convinced sinner, to invite his confidence in supplicating the throne of grace for the pardon of sin; and to confirm his trust in building his eternal hopes on the foundation of Christ. Under the deep sense of his misery, and of the utter impotence of nature to impart any relief to his troubled mind, the promise of the Saviour must yield his first consolation, and offer his first refuge. Under the convictions of guilt, and of the just displeasure of Almighty God, the promise of the free and full forgiveness of sin, must first administer peace to his anxious thoughts. And when persuaded to embrace the gospel in faith, he will experience the necessity of having continual recourse to the promises and aids of the Holy Spirit, for the sanctification of his nature, and his growth in grace. Without this precious resource, he would find himself too weak to contend against the corruptions of the heart, and the seductions of the world. In

the progress of the divine life he will experience the benefit of continually resorting to the promises of the covenant for his encouragement in duty, his comfort in trials, and, at length, his support in the great conflict of death. Finally, in the promise of eternal life we behold the glorious reward of his faithful labours, and the blessed consummation of all his pious hopes. In this order, therefore, a sincere believer will most reasonably be led to contemplate the precious promises of the new covenant.

#### OF THE CONDITION OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

Having treated of the constituent promises of the covenant, it falls next in order to state its conditions. Those who confound the Covenant of Grace, and the Covenant of Redemption, pronounce the righteousness of Christ to be its sole and exclusive condition. And, if we enquire after the meritorious title of the redeemed sinner to eternal life, it is, beyond all question, to be found only in the Redeemer's righteousness. Those, on the other hand, who adopt this principle—that the covenant is made with the believer through Christ, affirm that *faith* is its proper condition;—that is, his explicit acceptance of the gracious propositions of the covenant, with full understanding and hearty acquiescence in their terms. This sincere, intelligent, and affectionate act of the mind, gives him, according to the promise, an interest in the merits of the Redeemer, and lays the foundation of that holi-

ness of heart which introduces him to the possession, and qualifies him for the enjoyment of eternal life.

A proper decision on this subject depends, in a great degree, on the implication of the term condition. If it intend any act of obedience on the *merit* of which the blessing is bestowed, it is evident that the believer possessing no such merit in himself, and the covenant, in relation to him, being wholly of grace, it must, in this view of it, be without any condition, there can be no covenant with the believer. But if, by this term, be intended the qualifications which prepare the soul to receive and enjoy the ultimate blessings of this most gracious institution, and in consequence of which the blessing is received through Christ; it comprehends all the virtues and graces of the divine life. With strict propriety, indeed, they cannot be denominated *conditions* of the covenant; but ought justly to be ranked among its promised blessings. They are the gifts of God through the Spirit.

In order to give to this subject as much simplicity and plainness as possible, agreeably to the system hitherto pursued, it is necessary to bear in mind, what has been before suggested, that the new covenant is to be ranged under that species of contracts which are denominated gratuitous. In this class the condition requires only the explicit acceptance of the favour, with proper *dispositions*, and a hearty acqui-

Another requisite in compacts of this kind, is a hearty acquiescence in the object, and views of the benefactor. Of this whole dispensation of grace then the acknowledged object is the restoration of human nature to its lost holiness, as the only way to perfect happiness, and to immortal life. In the desire of happiness all men will earnestly concur, but not all, of a happiness through sanctification of their nature; the acquiescence of the heart in this object, implies the love of universal holiness. Of this affection, the efficient principle is a cordial belief in the gospel of our salvation, and in Jesus Christ, the great sum of the gospel. Therefore, in this view also, faith is to be regarded as the condition of the covenant. But it must ever be remembered that it is a condition simply of qualification, not of merit. Merit in man would destroy the idea of mercy in God. How, indeed, can our belief of the most pure and excellent truths, although ultimately preparing the soul for her heavenly inheritance, be the ground on which we can meritoriously claim the possession of the blessing? Faith, therefore, is only the gracious condition of a most gracious covenant.



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**OF**

**SANCTIFICATION.**

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rects the movements of his almighty providence over the world.

#### TWO ERRORS ON THIS SUBJECT.

Two errors exist on this subject, equally distant from the truth; one which ascribes the regeneration, or rather as they would say the moral cultivation of the heart, and the whole progress of our improvement in virtue and sanctity of life, merely to the reasonings and reflections of our own minds, aided, perhaps, by the word of God. And supposes the moral effects which, in holy scripture, are ascribed to the Divine Spirit, to be attributed to him, solely, because he has illuminated the understandings of the sacred writers, and dictated to them those truths intended to enlighten, and reform the world. Whence, by a natural and common figure of speech, the Author is substituted in the place of his work.

The other is to impute so much to the immediate, and exclusive operation of the Holy Spirit, that the instrumentality of the word, or, indeed, of any of the ordinary means of grace, seems to be, in a great measure, superseded. Their language conveys this idea, that the change upon the soul is strictly an act of creation, which is necessary to pass upon the state and dispositions of the heart, before the motives of the gospel can have any operative and sanctifying

withstanding the deep corruption of the fall, capable of discerning in a degree, though it were as the twilight before the dawn, the illumination of divine truth shining around them in the word of God, which may be perceived by every diligent inquirer through the concurrent aids of the Holy Spirit, that are now, by the grace of Christ, in various degrees, universally diffused in the church. The sparks of light will, at first indeed, be small and feeble, but each advance makes them susceptible of still farther increase, till they become the principle of a new life.

What is the peculiar nature of the agency of the divine Spirit, distinct from, and superior to the ordinary influence of education; or what is his internal operation on the mind must, like all the works of God, be inscrutable. But the reality of his concurrent influence in illuminating the understanding, in rectifying the action of the will, in regenerating and sanctifying the heart, are truths most explicitly taught in the holy scriptures. The agency of this divine principle in the moral world, bears a resemblance to the operations of providential agency in the system of nature: being in all things, perfectly concurrent with the established laws of material action in the universe. The movements of the Spirit of God, where no miracle is intended, are ever conducted according to the laws of the rational system, the laws of human liberty, and the moral laws of the heart. In accomplishing the regeneration of the believer, the blessed Spirit is

deeply rooted in our nature, that they never can be completely eradicated. While we remain in the garden of God upon earth, a corrupted stock must still send forth degenerate scions. Gradually to be subduing them without ever arriving at complete victory over their luxuriant growth, is the utmost that the humble christian can hope. And the condition of the real disciple in the present life, is only a condition of constant and progressive improvement. *Grow in grace*, saith the apostle, *and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. That there are always many defects mixed with the virtues and graces of the most eminent saints, is manifest from the whole tenor of the sacred writings; and appears continually in the confessions, and records of the experience of the saints. *There is not a just man upon earth*, saith the royal preacher, *that doeth good and sinneth not*. *In many things*, saith the apostle, *we all offend*. And the most devout and affectionate of the whole college of the disciples pronounces—*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*.

At the first view this idea seems to contradict the language of our symbols which assert that the believer *is renewed in the whole man after the image of God*. But between these ideas when rightly explained, there is no opposition. This symbolic language, far from signifying the holy perfection of the believer, simply implies that the predominant action of the powers of human nature in him is habitually directed by

Christ Jesus." "Whosoever is born of God," saith John, "doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God,"—John iii. 9. Many expressions there are which speak a similar language. But it obviously appears from their whole strain, and the connexions in which they stand, that the perfection which the scriptures ascribe to believers, implies something very different from that state of holiness which is exempted from all sin, error, and frailty.—This term in our language, as well as the corresponding terms in the Greek and Hebrew, has obtained a figurative signification, even in common usage, by which it is made to express that state of objects in which they possess all the necessary parts, and the usual properties of the species to which they belong. We say of a child which is complete in all its limbs and organs, that it is a perfect child. And of one who has rendered himself competently master of all the requisite branches of liberal art to qualify himself for public life, that his education is perfect. The same term is familiarly applied to plants and animals, and generally, as already indicated, to all objects which possess the genuine properties of their species.—If, then, we suppose the dispositions, affections, and principles, which distinguish sincere believers, to form the characteristics of a moral species, that state of the soul which embraces all these properties, may justly be styled a state of christian perfection. This, perhaps, is simply the idea annexed to that form of expression by the sacred writers. The christians were sometimes pronounced perfect by the

## OF THE ORDINARY MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

The Holy Spirit is acknowledged by all devout and rational disciples to be the supreme efficient agent in the regeneration and sanctification of his people : but as he acts only through means instituted by God himself, it is a practical question of no small importance to every christian, in what way he may best promote the holy culture of the heart, and advance in the habits of the divine life. These subjects are so constantly illustrated in the instructions of the pulpit, and enter so largely into the scheme of all the practical writers on religion, that, in a general system of theological doctrine, they require only to be briefly suggested. They may be embraced under the following heads :—the diligent study of the holy scriptures, and of the writings of wise and pious men, designed to illustrate and enforce their sacred truths—fervent prayer to the Father of Spirits—frequent and profound meditation on divine things—pious association, and conference with judicious christians—faithful attendance on all the public and private institutions of religion—and strengthening, by constant exercise, the habits of a holy life.

Heaven consists less in local situation, than in the dispositions of the soul which qualify it for the enjoyment of God, and of that supreme felicity which is to be possessed only in his immediate presence. And these dispositions are, above all things, to be cultivated upon earth in the acts and habits of a holy life, in the prospect of our future, and eternal existence.

OF THE HOLINESS AND PERFECTION OF A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS ACT.

It is, in this place, perhaps, proper to inquire what constitutes the rectitude of a moral act, and procures it acceptance with God? Every morally perfect act proceeds, in the first place, from a good motive; that is, from the desire of glorifying God, or of promoting the happiness of man, and from both these intentions, where they can be combined in the same action. One ruling and habitual principle governs the whole conduct, and presides in each individual act of a believer's life;—I mean the profound sentiment of obedience to God, and of Gratitude to the Redeemer of the world, which strengthens and animates the principle of every particular duty. The next requisite is, that the substance of the act in itself be good; that is, calculated to promote some proper, useful, or benevolent end; embracing, within the range of these objects, the glory of God, and the felicity of human nature. Which condition excludes, of consequence,

to discuss in this place, and the disquisition of which is of the less importance, as they will often occur in the course of your reading. I proceed, therefore, to the consideration of the last blessing usually enumerated by Calvinistic writers as flowing, in this life, from the Covenant of Grace, which is

#### THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

The idea annexed to this principle is, that those who have once been regenerated, and sanctified by the Spirit of God, shall never lose the seed effectually implanted by that Divine Teacher, but be able always to preserve it, and persevere in the discharge of every duty to eternal life, amidst partial fluctuations, however, arising from the imbecility of human nature. Many writers of distinguished name in the church deny this doctrine entirely. For, not acknowledging the predestinating decrees of God, and ascribing little to the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, they pronounce that the sanctity of the believer, like every moral quality in man, must partake of the mutability of human nature. To render the perseverance of the believer *certain*, they affirm, requires the operation of some necessary cause incompatible with the moral freedom of the mind. This objection has already been considered, and obviated, when treating of the decrees of God; when it was, I hope, clearly shewn that the influence of the Divine Spirit over human actions may be exert-



been quoted on this occasion ; and which I repeat without comment, as being more than sufficient, I presume, to support the general truth, in the mind of every candid interpreter of scripture. “ And there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall do great signs and wonders, so as to draw away, if it were possible, even the elect,”—*Matt.* xxiv. 24. “ This is the will of my Father who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose none ; but I shall raise it up at the last day,”—*John* vi. 39. “ And I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands. My Father who gave them to me is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father’s hand,”—*John* x. 28, 29. “ For we know that to those who love God, all things work together for good, to those who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, those he foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he should be the first born among many brethren. For whom he did foreknow, those he also called ; and whom he called those he also justified, and whom he justified those he also glorified,”—*John* viii. 28....30. “ Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us is God ; who also hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,”—*2 Cor* i. 21, 22. “ Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye have been sealed unto the day of redemption,”—*Eph.* iv. 30. “ For us who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last

effect it might have upon the hypocrite, would ever dispose a pious and generous mind to the neglect of any duty ; and would not rather stimulate it to augmented diligence in the divine life, by the powerful excitement of gratitude. This objection must arise from inattention to the genuine principles of human nature ; and to the scriptural grounds on which the doctrine rests. As to the first, the assurance of possessing a felicity which we greatly value, and have long earnestly sought to acquire, often redoubles our exertions, and always, in a generous mind, raises its powers to a higher tone of action. With regard to the second, the grounds on which this doctrine rests in the holy scriptures is, the merciful constitution of the Covenant of Grace, and the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. These principles, as they have been already explained, far from nourishing an indolent temper, are connected with the highest exertions of the human faculties and the most faithful use of all the appointed means of sanctification. Upon the whole, however, this doctrine, in the discussions it has undergone, and the manner in which it has often been treated, has unhappily been connected more with the truth of speculation, and contended for more earnestly on that ground, than for its influence on practical holiness. Speculative truth, however, is intimately conjoined with practical utility. But many of the truths involved in the disquisitions which have taken place on this subject, rest upon principles so sublime, or of so refined a

subjects of your constant reading and study ; and being too tedious for the limits prescribed to this compendious system, I leave them to your own inquiries and reflections—and proceed, in the next place, to treat of the external seals of the Covenant of Grace.

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**OF**  
**JUSTIFICATION,**  
**AND**  
**ADOPTION.**

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OF  
**JUSTIFICATION.**

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**JUSTIFICATION** is the immediate consequence, on the part of God, of a sincere faith ; and is defined, in the orthodox symbols, to be an act of God's free grace, by which the penitent and believing sinner is acquitted from the guilt and condemnation of his sins, and accepted, and treated as righteous, only for the sake of the merits of Jesus Christ ; received by faith, and imputed to him, according to the tenor of the New Covenant. Justification is a forensic term taken from a process in law, in which the criminal is acquitted of the charges exhibited against him, so as to be absolved from the penalties pronounced by the law, and he restored, and again entitled to the privileges of citizenship. This is a peculiar case in which the criminal, though culpable with respect to every charge, is absolved through the mediation of another, who has satisfied the demands of justice and the law in his room. The reasonableness and equity of vicarious substitution, and consequently, of the imputation of the merits of one to another in certain cases, has been already considered, under the Covenant of Grace.

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE APOSTLES ST. PAUL AND  
ST. JAMES ON THIS SUBJECT.**

It is frequently objected to us, that the apostle James ascribes the justification of the believer, not to his faith, but to his good works. To understand St. James, in this place, it is necessary carefully to attend to his object in writing this epistle. He wished to turn the attention of the church to that criterion by which the disciples of Christ should most effectually demonstrate the sincerity of their faith, and their attachment to their Redeemer. There were in that age, as there are in every period, many who presumed to recommend themselves to their fellow-christians by a boastful ostentation of religious zeal, while they were destitute of those works of piety and virtue which alone could adorn their holy profession, in the esteem of mankind. Such false and hollow pretences occasioned great reproach to the nascent cause of christianity. The apostle, therefore, was solicitous to purge the church of these blots on the Christian name ; and to convince the world that the faith of Christ, instead of being a cover for indolence and vice, is the most effectual principle of good morals, and sanctity of life. In his epistle, therefore, he earnestly teaches that, in the actual circumstances of the church, it was of primary importance, that the disciples of Christ should exhibit, in their example, the virtuous and holy influence of their doctrine. And, as faith was publicly known

sion of the name of Christ, and of the purity of that holy principle of faith which governs in the heart of a true disciple. And this practical manifestation of a pure and sincere faith, is, indeed, the genuine source of the pious consolation of a believer, and the only stable ground on which he can apply to himself the gracious promises of the New Covenant. For, although the integrity of his faith is known to the Omniscient Jehovah, in the first moments of its existence, as well as at any future period; and his justification passes immediately with God, before any practical proofs exhibited to men of its pious and charitable works; yet, by its fruits alone can we certainly demonstrate our title to rejoice in our interest in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**THE BELIEVER, NOTWITHSTANDING HIS JUSTIFICATION,  
STILL SUBJECT TO THE CALAMITIES OF THIS LIFE.**

The believer, notwithstanding his deliverance from the dominion of sin, and his being made an heir of eternal life by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, must continue, in this world, subject to the manifold evils resulting from the frailties of a mortal body, and frequently from a disordered mind. By the introduction of the New Covenant, established in the power and grace of the Mediator, provision is made for his ultimate redemption from eternal death, when he shall have laid in the grave the corruptions of the flesh. In the mean time, the moral depravation of the soul is gradually de-

gospel, is, that eminent saints, for whom the demands of the law have been already satisfied by the sufferings of Christ, together with their own, may, by voluntary and extraordinary duties, inflictions, and sacrifices, lay up a store of merit, to be imputed, along with that of the Saviour, to believers less advanced in the road of perfection. On this wretched foundation, was built that shameful traffic of indulgences, and purgatorial exemptions, which grew to such enormity, as to become, at length, one of the principal causes of the reformation in the sixteenth century. A single passage in the epistle to the Collossians, and that grossly misinterpreted, by the knavery of the Popes, and the ignorance of the Monks, was the sole support of this monstrous fabric. It is contained in the following words:—*Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church,*—ch. i. ver. 24. The expression *my sufferings for you* evidently refers to the pains which he endured in their service; and that which follows, on which the principal stress is laid, *the afflictions of Christ* *ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ*, is a Grecism which signifies *the afflictions borne by him for the sake of Christ*; and is similar, in the structure of the phrase, to other expressions, *καθ' ἡμᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ*—*ἐν ἡμῶν τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ*—*ἐν ἐμοὶ τοῦ Κυρίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, the import of which has never created any difficulty, because there is no sinister purpose to be answered by a false interpretation. The full force of these phrases may be given in the following words:—*Who now rejoice in the*



to his gracious promise, and the constitution of the New Testament confirmed in the blood of Christ, they are made heirs of an eternal inheritance. Taken from a state of hostile estrangement, they are introduced into his family.

This figure was peculiarly expressive and obvious, at the time when the evangelists and apostles wrote, and within the limits of the Roman empire; because the necessity, and the practice of adoption, was in that nation, and in that age, more prevalent than at any other period of history, or in any other portion of the globe. There are many passages in the sacred writings which justify the introduction of this term into our systems, to express this relation of the believer to God under the Covenant of Grace. "As many as received him," saith the evangelist John, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." And the apostle Paul; "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, by which we cry Abba! Father! The Spirit itself testifieth with our spirit that we are the sons of God; and, if sons, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,"—*Rom. viii. 14....17.* To the Ephesians he writes; "Having foreordained us unto adoption, through Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace,"—*Eph. i. 5, 6.*

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**OF THE**  
**EXTERNAL SEALS**  
**OF THE**  
**COVENANT OF GRACE.**

**1st. OF BAPTISM.**

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**OF THE**  
**EXTERNAL SEALS**  
**OF THE**  
**COVENANT OF GRACE.**

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**AS** God has been pleased to exhibit his grace to the world under the idea of a covenant which he condescends to enter into with the penitent and believing sinner, and provisionally offers to all who, by the gospel, are called from among our fallen and corrupted race, to seek the inheritance of eternal life, we have just ground to expect that every ordinary form, which usage has annexed to a transaction of this kind among men, will be preserved in this appointment of God. Therefore, to the gracious *promise* of the covenant, which, as has before been shewn, constitutes its essence, he has annexed his seal, in order to add greater authenticity to this object of our faith, and give it a more affecting impression on the heart.

**BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER BOTH SEALS OF THE**  
**COVENANT OF GRACE.**

A seal is usually, any emblematic symbol employed in consequence of the agreement of parties, or appointed by

Their being appointed by Almighty God to be employed as seals of the Covenant of Grace, may be further established, from the express words of the apostle, by whom circumcision is styled, *a seal of the righteousness which is by faith*,—Rom. iv. 11 : and from the analogy which subsists between the ordinances of baptism and circumcision.—Both are emblems of purification—both administered on the condition of believing the promise of God in the Messiah—both are the external sign and confirmation of this faith—and both are applied, as shall be shewn, hereafter, for attaining all the gracious purposes of the covenant to believers, and to their infant seed. And this style has been used, with respect to baptism in particular, by the earliest writers in the christian church ; and by those who were cotemporary with, or who immediately succeeded the apostles.

#### OTHER DENOMINATIONS APPLIED TO THEM.

Besides the denominations which these ordinances have respectively received, arising from circumstances peculiar to each—such as the *regeneration of water* applied to baptism, and the *eucharist*, and *communion* applied to the Lord's Supper, they have, from the earliest ages, been entitled *mysteries* and *sacraments*.—The former term was borrowed from the pagan worship, and cherished by the converts from that superstition, through a natural attachment to ancient forms and usages from which cause it was early introduced

into the temples of christianity. The sublime principles of natural religion which were discovered by the philosophers, or had been handed down by tradition from the remotest antiquity, and preserved in their temples by their priests, who had mingled them, however, with the grossest superstitions of the vulgar, were considered as too elevated for the popular understanding. They were separated, therefore, from the common mass of pagan doctrines, and reserved to be communicated only to a few men whose rank gave them superior means of information, or who had rendered themselves worthy the distinction by eminent virtue and prudence. When men of this character offered themselves to the college which presided over the public religion, they were, with great solemnity introduced into the recesses of their temples, and there instructed in those theological principles which it was supposed the body of the people were not capable of understanding, or were not worthy to receive. Those who were thus instructed were called the *initiated*, and the rites accompanying these instructions, were named *mysteries*, from a Greek term implying *silence*, because they respected doctrines which were not to be communicated to the people. And the initiated were laid under the most sacred obligations not to reveal aught, which passed on those occasions, within their temples. Since the sacraments of the christian church were designed, in like manner, to discriminate the faithful from the profane, and were not to be imparted promiscuously, but reserved for those only who had attained a spiritual, and sub-

limer knowledge of its principles, which the world did not enjoy, they were, in allusion to the mysteries of their ancient temples, which had acquired their early reverence, and were held in great veneration throughout the Roman empire, called by the same name.

The denomination of *sacrament* has a different origin. It was the military oath among the Romans, by which the soldiers plighted their allegiance to their general, or to the emperor. And as the christian life has been styled a warfare, in which the believer contends not only against spiritual enemies, but often, especially in that early age, was exposed to the most formidable dangers, he is justly said to pledge himself, in these ordinances, to the Lord Jesus Christ, as *the captain of his salvation*—to fight under his banner—to, endure, in his service, every trial—and to expose himself, if necessary, to danger, and to death. And the primitive christians, in the immediate prospect of great conflicts, and of persecution, often renewed, by these holy rites, their vows of fidelity to their Lord, and reanimated their courage in suffering; especially by the sacrament of the Lord's supper. The term sacrament is not found among the writers of the New Testament; it was, however, very early adopted by the first christians. The apostles having represented the service of the cross under allusions borrowed from a state of warfare, and their followers finding, in painful experience, the perils and sufferings they were compelled to endure, soon

applied to the vows by which they devoted themselves to their Redeemer, a title so familiar to them in the military life.

#### THE DESIGN OF THE EXTERNAL SEALS OF THE COVENANT.

It is of importance to every christian distinctly to understand the import of his public use of the seals of the Covenant, and of the obligations which he imposes on his soul by this solemn act. Annexing our seal to the Covenant of Grace, or using the seal which God has appointed, necessarily implies our full belief of the precious doctrines involved in that covenant, and a hearty acquiescence in all its conditions. It implies, at the same time, a vow of consecration, by which he renews his self-devotion to the service of God through Jesus Christ. And, lastly, it implies, with regard to the believer himself, a personal ratification of the Covenant, on his part, by a sensible symbol calculated more strongly to authenticate the transaction—to assist faith by the co-operation of sense—to fix a deeper impression on the heart, thereby confirming the purposes of duty, and leaving a more awful testimony for God, if he should afterwards prove unfaithful to this most sacred of our duties in the church.

#### THE DIFFERENT IMPORT OF THE TWO SEALS.

The ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper, being both regarded as the seals of the Covenant of Grace, it is

necessary, with particular care, to attend to the proper distinction existing between them. The former may be regarded chiefly as the seal annexed immediately by God, through his public servants in the church, to this covenant, to give it authenticity, and to ratify it on his part to his people. The latter may be considered principally as the seal annexed by the believer to the same covenant, confirming his acceptance of its terms, and laying his soul, by that act, under the most sacred obligations of obedience. A covenant, being a mutual stipulation, requires, in order to its completion, the seals of the respective parties. God, by the ministry of his servants, who are officers in his church, annexes his own seal in baptism ; and in the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, the believer personally affixes his seal to the same instrument. The veracity of God, indeed, needs no such adventitious confirmation. But as he has been pleased so far to adapt himself to the weakness of human nature, which is ever strongly moved by sensible impressions, he has not only offered his grace to the world in the form which takes place in covenant transactions among men, but confirmed it, according to the same customs, by the legal and authoritative sanction of a seal. That baptism is to be viewed chiefly as the seal of God affixed to his own covenant, may be concluded, not only from the ordinary forms of this instrument, but from its analogy to circumcision, in the room of which rite it has manifestly been substituted. The apostle declares that Abraham received, from God, *circumcision, a seal of the right-*



the church, to his own proffers of mercy ; yet, as the rites of religion may, frequently, be taken in a double sense, this ordinance, as it respects the act of the parent, may be viewed also as his own seal, by which he declares his belief, and acceptance of the covenant, its promises, conditions and duties on his own behalf—his choice of its blessings as the portion of his child—and his consecration of himself, and his precious offspring, to the glory and service of Almighty God.

1. Baptism is our christian circumcision, *a seal of the righteousness which is by faith*. But that we may have a clearer view of the nature and importance of this ordinance, we must go back to the origin of its type in the ancient church. When religious truth was likely to perish from the world, which, in a few ages after the deluge, was overwhelmed in idolatry, and sunk in extreme dissolution of manners, it pleased God, nearly in the beginning of that general darkness and corruption, to establish a church in which he might preserve the knowledge of his *name*, and deposit his holy oracles, with the future hopes of the universe. This church consisted, in the beginning, of the single family of Abraham, with whom he entered into a gracious covenant, accepting, as his title to eternal life, *the righteousness of faith* in the future Saviour,\* who was to spring from his own loins ; engaging

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\* This is fairly inferred from the expression of the apostle, who styles the seal of the Abrahamic Covenant *the seal of the righteousness which is by faith*.

cious protection of Almighty God, and designated him as a member of that chosen community to whose pious custody were committed his holy oracles, those precious treasures of divine truth. While other nations were left to the obscure teachings of nature, and the errors of a depraved reason, this sealed nation were made the depositaries of clearer lights, and the heirs of sublimer hopes. The emblems which were engraven, if I may speak so, on that seal, I mean the *blood* of circumcision, corresponding with the water of baptism, pointed to that purity of heart which is the end of all true religion ; and to that precious blood, which is, at once, the purchase of our salvation, and the fountain in which all our sins are cleansed. Such was the benefit of this ancient rite to the church founded in Abraham, and afterwards embracing all the posterity of Israel : to them were committed the oracles of God with all their lights, their hopes, their graces, their means of holiness, and of eternal life.

These brief expositions will afford some principles by which to explain the nature and the benefits of that baptismal rite which Christ has substituted in the room of the Abrahamic and Mosaic symbol of the promise. Baptism is our christian circumcision ; the seal of a more pure and luminous dispensation of the covenant than that either of Moses, or of Abraham. And it is with the view of proposing, as far as I am able, some precise and definite ideas on this initiating institution of the christian church, that I have made these pre-

**Messiah.\*** He taught a new and more rigorous discipline of repentance than was known to the Jews of that age. And the disciples who followed him, admiring the sanctity of his doctrine, and the abstemious purity of his manners, he initiated by baptism,† preparing them, in this manner, for that still more pure and perfect discipline which was shortly to be introduced by the Saviour of the world. It was, besides, required by the customs of that nation, that all proselytes from among the gentiles should be initiated into the church of Israel, and make their profession of the doctrines of Moses, and the prophets, by baptism.

The ordinance of baptism, therefore, considered simply in the view which has just been presented to you, contains a pledge of our discipleship—a public avowal of Christ as our great Master and Teacher—an explicit profession of our faith in the doctrines taught by his Spirit in those holy oracles committed to the custody of his church for its illumination and sanctification.

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\* The same rite of initiation into their schools, and with the same meaning, was frequently used by the philosophers of Greece, as well as of many eastern nations, from whom the Greeks borrowed it.

† This fact serves to explain a passage in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul meeting with certain disciples in Asia who were very imperfectly instructed in the principles of the gospel, demanded of them *unto what they had been baptised?* that is, to what system of doctrines? They answered, *unto John's baptism.* They were disciples of John, and had embraced only the doctrine of repentance which he had taught. This custom explains the meaning of St. Paul when he *thanks God that he had baptised none of them but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say he had baptised in his own name,* thereby putting himself at the head of a new sect.

Although a man, at the age of reason, may justly make this profession for himself, it may be asked, perhaps, if a parent can rightfully make it in the name of his infant, so that, when that infant shall have arrived at maturity, it shall be legally considered as his act? Whatever differences of opinion may exist with regard to this question, according to the various lights in which the subject of it may be viewed, all will agree in the following principle, that it is both the right, and the duty of a parent to place his beloved offspring under the best means to enlighten and cultivate their minds, to form their hearts, to regulate their lives, and to prepare them, if possible, for the highest happiness, both in this world, and the world to come: in one word, to initiate them in the school of Christ.\* This school is the church: these means of education are the ordinances, the instructions, the discipline, the watchful care, and prayers of the church. And it is one, and not the least of the spiritual blessings resulting from baptism in infancy, that, thereby, parents, in addition to the tender constraints of natural duty, impose upon themselves the most solemn voluntary obligations to *train*

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\* Upon this subject, one would think that there could not exist any diversity of opinion. It seems to be a manifest principle of justice, that a parent has a right to enter into contract, or to make any engagement in the name of his child, for his benefit, which it is the privilege of his child, when he arrives at mature age, to accept; although he is at liberty also, to his own detriment, to reject; and which, if it involves his duty, as well as his interest, as in the present case, he is under sacred obligations to fulfil. Such engagement is not imposing on our posterity a burden, but gaining for them a benefit.

*up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;* and that children enjoy still further advantages by being placed under the immediate and special care of that holy community to whom are committed the oracles of God.

2. But there is another and more interesting light in which this ordinance is to be viewed. It is the seal by which God has condescended visibly to confirm to the church the blessings of the New Covenant which he has graciously established in Christ for the redemption of the world. This was the import of the correspondent rite of the church of Israel. God gave to Abraham circumcision *a seal of the righteousness which is by faith.\** And this is one of the principal denominations by which baptism has been designated in the christian church from the earliest ages. But here it is necessary to remark and correct an error upon this subject which has unhappily disturbed the ideas of many good and excellent men. Baptism has been regarded by them as the

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\* *A seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being uncircumcised.* This expression cannot reasonably be supposed to mean, as has been asserted by some writers, merely a *declaration* of the *sincerity* of Abraham's faith; for this seal was administered to the offspring of Abraham at an age in which no such declaration could be expected from them. Besides, the apostle, in the place is speaking of circumcision, not merely as a sign given to Abraham in particular, but as an ordinance of the church. In this general view it was designed as a *seal of the righteousness of faith*; that is, of that gracious covenant which has substituted the *righteousness which comes by faith* in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the room of the *perfect and personal obedience* required by the first covenant, and which has now become impracticable to the frailty and corruption of human nature, being possible only through a Mediator, and Surety.

mise which he had made to *the father of the faithful* ; *I will be a God to you, and to your seed after you.\**

Do you ask if it is not doing dishonour to the faithfulness of Jehovah to suppose that his promise requires to be confirmed by symbols and sacraments, by oaths and seals ? Is not his word alone the firm, and immutable foundation of every believer's trust and hope ? It is true the veracity of God needs no support from outward forms ; and it is not for his sake, but for ours, that he is sometimes pleased to employ them, in order to give the deeper impression to divine truth upon the heart. Frail as we are, and receiving all our impressions through the medium of the senses, ideas, merely intellectual, are neither

\* If we refer to the whole strain of the history, in the 17th chapter of Genesis which records the transactions of God with Abraham, this interpretation will be confirmed. It was a covenant entirely of the *gratuitous* kind, on the part of God, engaging by an expression of the most comprehensive meaning—[*I will be a God to you, &c.*] to bestow the most ample spiritual blessings on his chosen servant, and on his posterity. In every covenant of this nature the forms of ratification are used by him only, and are intended to oblige only him who bestows the favour. The beneficiary simply receives the promise, or charter which, when confirmed by the requisite legal forms, and ratified by the seal of the benefactor, becomes his title of inheritance, or possession, on the performance of whatever condition it contains.

It was not an unusual thing for Almighty God thus to confirm his promises and covenants to patriarchs, and holy men, by some external sign, or token. His promise to Noah he confirmed by his bow in the clouds. To Gideon he gave a sign, or seal of his commission to be the deliverer of Israel, by consuming his sacrifice upon the rock. To Abraham he gave the sign of circumcision. And, on another occasion, he caused a burning lamp to pass between the parts of his sacrifice. To Hezekiah the sign of the shadow returning back upon the dial was added to the promise of his recovery. And to the house of David, and of Israel, he gave by the prophet Isaiah, this mysterious sign, *a virgin shall conceive and bare a son,*

therefore, is the seal of God applied to his own covenant, thereby confirming to those, to whom it is administered, the propositions of his mercy through Jesus Christ, and visibly testifying that they are taken from under the curse of the original and broken covenant, which admitted only of *perfect obedience*, and condemned the transgressor to eternal death, and placed under the new dispensation of grace, which confers forgiveness on repentance, and salvation on the obedience of faith.

As every public seal contains emblems expressive of the nature, and security of the blessings it confers, we see in like manner, this christian seal distinguished by emblems, the most simple, indeed, but the most impressive and august. We see in it the symbol of that precious blood which was shed for our redemption, and of the Holy Spirit by whose gracious influences the principles of a divine life are infused into the soul, and cherished to perfection ; and, finally, the symbol of that heavenly purity which should adorn and distinguish the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Thus have I presented to you this ordinance in its double signification : as the rite by which we are initiated into the school of Christ ; and as the seal by which God continually repeats and confirms the gracious propositions and promises of his covenant to the seed of the church.

“but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham,—*Rom. iv. 13—16*: meaning the believing gentiles who should be called to a participation of his privileges. What, then, is that *promise made sure*, by the seal of the covenant, to *all the seed*, both under the law, and under the gospel? If we look back to the institution of this covenant with Abraham, and of the holy seal by which it was confirmed, we there find the promise; *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee*. This is what was emphatically called *the promise* by the ancient Jewish writers; and was, as I have formerly shewn, another denomination for the *covenant of grace*. Under the same denomination it is frequently referred to in the writings of the apostles. And whenever this holy transaction is mentioned by the sacred writers, under this form, it is manifest that they intend the peculiar promise of the gospel, which is salvation by Christ through *the righteousness of faith*, comprehending all that is implied in *the covenant of grace*. Of this no other proof need be adduced than its being so often put by them in contrast with *the law*.\* To receive the seal of this promise

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\* See particularly the Ep. to Gal. ch. iii. v. 16, 17, 18,—21—29.—18, If the inheritance be by works of the law, it is no more of *promise*. 21, Is the law, then against the *promise* of God. 24—29, The *law* is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. If we be *Christ's*, then are we *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the *promise*. 16, 17, Now to Abraham and his seed were the *promises* made. And this I say that the covenant, plainly implying the covenant contained in the promises, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the *law* which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the *promise* of none effect. The *promise* here is evidently equivalent to the *covenant* made with Abraham: and what could that covenant be which *was confirmed of God in Christ*, but the *covenant of grace*?



through the righteousness of faith. He adds, *and not to you only and to your children*, who are naturally descendants of Abraham, but to the gentiles also, who are frequently designated in holy scripture by those who are *afar off*. Called by Christ into the church, which was so long confined to the posterity of Israel, they are now equally with Jews, entitled to all its blessings, and its privileges, and among others, to this precious seal of the covenant for themselves, and their offspring.

It is in vain to allege, as has been done by certain writers, that the promise here refers to the prediction of the prophet Joel, who foretold, that *in the last days God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh*. For what connexion has this prophecy with the command *to be baptized*? The apostle is answering the anxious inquiry of his hearers, who were *pricked in their hearts*; *men and brethren, what shall we do?* And in his answer, directs them to the proper source of peace, and, consolation;—*repent and be baptized*, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost in his sanctifying power, and his comforting influence: for the promise, through Christ whom I preach, is, according to the tenor of the covenant with your father Abraham, *to you and to your children*; and not to you only, but to the gentiles also, *to those who are afar off*, who, by faith, shall become children of Abraham, and heirs of his blessings.

Such is the clear and obvious conclusion resulting from the apostle's words. The same consequence arises, with no

less certainty, from the advice addressed by St. Paul to a believing husband or wife, not to separate from the unbelieving wife or husband with whom they may be respectively connected. For, saith he, the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer, *else were your children unclean, but now are they holy*. What is the proper import of this term? Throughout the sacred scriptures, it is applied only to such persons or things as are peculiarly set apart, and consecrated to God. In the connexion in which it stands in this passage, it can imply nothing less than that children are qualified, by the profession of faith, or the church membership of one of their parents, to be solemnly set apart from the world, and devoted to God—a rite which can visibly take place only in the ordinance of baptism.\*

If the right of infants to the ordinance of baptism evidently results, as, by the preceding illustrations, it appears to do, from the analogy of the christian with the Abrahamic seal of the covenant, it is still farther confirmed by the practice of the apostles. The passage to which reference has

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\* It is a prostitution of language, in this place to confound, as has been done by one sect of christians, holiness with legitimacy of birth. The whole train of the apostle's observations, and reasoning, translated according to this meaning of the term, would be absurd or ridiculous.—*For the unbelieving wife is sanctified, that is, made a legitimate subject of marriage, by the believing husband, and the unbelieving husband is sanctified, that is, made a legitimate subject of marriage, by the believing wife*, therefore, their marriage was lawful; else were your children illegitimate, but now are they lawfully begotten. Besides other absurdities, this would be proving the lawfulness of the marriage by the legitimacy of the children, and again the legitimacy of the children by the lawfulness of the marriage.

just been made, affords no slight attestation to the practice of St. Paul. In addition to this, when Lydia declared her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the same apostle, along with her, *baptized her household*. With Jairus also, he *baptized all who were in his house*. It has been objected to the evidence which we would derive from these facts, that those who are referred to, by the sacred historian, in the *house of Jairus*, and the *household of Lydia*, were only the adults of the respective families, who were themselves believers. What will not the prepossessions of party, or the pride of theory maintain, and defend? For this pretence certainly, the history affords no ground. It assigns no other reason for baptizing these families than simply the faith of Lydia and of Jairus.\*

3. I add that, if any apostolic usage can derive confirmation from the uniform practice, and tradition of the church, to modern, and very recent times, it is that of infant baptism. It is attested by Justin Martyr, who lived only forty years

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\* This was perfectly conformable to the example of the Jewish church in receiving proselytes either by circumcision, or by baptism, from the Gentile nations. The pagan convert who professed his faith in the great legislator of Israel, and the promises made to the fathers, at once incorporated his whole family along with himself, into the body of that chosen people.

It is said, indeed, by the writers who differ from us upon this subject, that, in the history of the New Testament, baptism is never administered except to a personal profession of faith. But, let it be remembered that this history records only examples of proselytes from unbelieving nations. In a similar case, a personal profession of faith would be required by the warmest friends of infant baptism. In the few instances in which families have been mentioned, we see that they always follow the faith of the head.

Having established the right of christian parents to have their offspring placed under the guardianship and care of the church, in the ordinance of baptism, let us examine, in the next place, what privileges and blessings are conferred by this act.

Whether we consider baptism as the rite by which our children are initiated into the church as the *school* of Christ, or as the *seal* which God has been pleased to annex to his covenant, in order to ratify, and more effectually, to confirm to our faith the promises of his grace, its privileges and blessings, rightly understood, are manifold and great. For to Abraham and his seed, to the church, and the seed of the church, are committed the oracles of God, with all their lights, their comforts, their precious promises, their immortal hopes. In order to give, at once, force and illustration to

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ther baptism ought to be administered to infants before the eighth day after their birth ; doubting whether or not the custom of the Jews in this respect ought to be followed. The council unanimously decreed that baptism ought not to be postponed till the eighth day. After stating the grounds of their decree, they conclude in these words ;—" Wherefore, dearly beloved, it is our opinion, that, from baptism and the grace of God who is benignant to all, none ought to be prohibited by us ; and, as this is to be observed with regard to all, so especially is it to be observed with respect to infants who are just born, and deserve our help, and the divine mercy."—Cyp. ep. ad. Fidum, chap. 63.

Let me subjoin the very pertinent remark of a judicious writer ; " Origen was born about eighty five years after the apostolic age. His father and grandfather were both christians, and as there can be no doubt of his being baptized in infancy, from the manner in which he speaks of infant baptism, this fact verifies the practice of the apostles ; and so carries up the universal usage of the church to within a very few years of those blessed companions of our Lord."

Such are the blessings connected with baptism, considered merely as an initiating symbol introducing us into the church of Christ. We are placed by it under the happiest, and most effectual cultivation for Heaven.

Let us now contemplate this symbol in another light, as the *seal* which God has annexed to his covenant for the solemn confirmation of his promises, and we shall discover in this view of it, a new treasure of spiritual blessings.

Every child of Adam, by *his* error, and fall, and by the rigorous tenor of the violated covenant, has become an heir of death. But God, in his infinite mercy, at the moment of transgression, placed the frailty of man under a dispensation of grace in Jesus Christ. Of this most benignant and merciful dispensation, which obviates, or remedies, the evils of the broken law, circumcision anciently, and now baptism, is the gracious assurance and seal. In the symbol of baptism, therefore, you behold the visible pledge, and annunciation, on the part of God, that the baptized infant is taken from under the impracticable conditions, and the curse of the first covenant, and placed under the grace of the second.\* You behold that precious infant, on its first entrance into exist-

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\* It is not intended by this to say, that the act of baptism transfers us from the one covenant to the other. That was done by the *promise of the Saviour* immediately after the Fall. But it is the solemn authentication of this truth on the part of God, and the declaratory seal of this grace.

kingdom of heaven. The infant being placed under the grace of the second covenant, is delivered from the curse of the first, so far, that, being united by a new and blessed relation to the Second Adam, its original taint and impurity, derived from its relation to the first, is covered by the blood of the atonement. It is, therefore, through the mercy of God in Christ, made an heir of eternal life. Of these precious truths baptism is the sacramental pledge, and seal of assurance given by God. What a consolation does this view present to the christian parent, who weeps over the dear remains of the infant snatched untimely from his embrace! What a comfortable and extended prospect does it exhibit of the grace of the gospel.\*

Having offered to your consideration, in a few plain and obvious principles, the right of infants born within the church, to the seal of the covenant, and pointed out the blessings of which they become partakers by it; I will next endeavour to designate, more particularly, the limits of the visible church, and exhibit the nature and extent of that profession of the name of Christ which entitles a parent to offer, and the

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\* Very far would I be from insinuating that those who die without baptism do, therefore, fail of salvation. But between the baptized and unbaptized infant dying in infancy, there is this difference—that, to the one, the inheritance of eternal life is conveyed by covenant from God, under his appointed seal; the other is left to his free, indeed, but unauthenticated pledge of his mercy in this ordinance.

regulating the exterior order and manners of its members. To the church of Israel, comprehending the entire nation, were the oracles of God committed. And the seal of that gracious covenant, which was contained, and explained in these oracles, and exhibited to the ancient church under a thousand typical rites, was impressed on all their offspring, and on all who were born in their houses, and trained up in the knowledge of divine truth under their care. Analogy, then, will lead us to extend the application of the christian seal to the *households*, and especially, to the *children* of all who are members of the visible church; that is, who have been baptized themselves, who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, who profess to embrace the holy scriptures as containing the only certain rule of duty, and the only foundation of their immortal hopes, who submit themselves and their households to the discipline and instruction of the church, and who promise to concur with her in the pious education and government of all those whom nature hath given to their affection, or providence subjected to their authority.

To the invisible church baptism cannot be confined, because men have no certain rule by which to discriminate it from the mass of visible professors. Let me ask those who suppose that somewhat more is necessary in the recipient to the validity of this ordinance than regular morals, an open profession of the faith, and submission to the discipline of the

It is, in the next place, the seal which God hath annexed to the external dispensation of his covenant, in order that he might, by a rite, so solemn, though so simple, confirm the propositions of his mercy to fallen man, through the atonement and mediation of the ever blessed Redeemer. The church openly annexes this seal to the covenant, in the name and by the authority of God himself. The church takes the infant under her protection and instruction. Most desirable it is to have the co-operation and assistance of the parents in this sacred and important duty; and they are bound, by every obligation, of nature and religion to afford it. But it is still more the duty of the church to enlighten and direct the infant's opening reason, to imbue it with holy and heavenly principles, to illustrate, to inculcate, to press upon it the precious privileges, the gracious promises, the glorious hopes of which she has given it the seal. The church when she is faithful to her trust, adopts every infant, whom she receives by baptism, within the pale of her privileges. It is her faith, her fidelity which is to be regarded in this ordinance even more than that of the parent.

It is with the view chiefly to the pious education of the seed of the church that this ordinance is administered to infants. *I know him*, saith God of the father of the faithful, at the institution of this rite, *that he will train up his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord*. In the primitive ages, when many parents were in-



est propriety : in other regions, where it is seldom necessary for this purpose, to wash daily more than a part of the body, a partial application of water may be made with equal reason. An action of our Saviour recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the gospel of John, is full of instruction on this subject. It was usual with the Jews, before eating, to wash their feet, a practice which had become necessary, both from the fashion of their dress, and their manner of reclining upon couches at their meals. Christ, in order to give his disciples a lesson, at once, of humility, and purity, condescended himself to wash their feet. When Peter understood the meaning of this action, and that it was intended as a symbol of his purification, and acceptance with his Lord, he exclaimed in the fervor of his zeal, *Lord ! not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head.* But, as the action of the Saviour was merely symbolical, cleansing that part of the body which it was customary to wash at that time, was sufficient to answer the design ; therefore, he replies to Peter, *he that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is every whit clean.*

Having made these preliminary remarks, I observe that the term baptism, in the sacred writings, is applied indifferently, to signify either partial, or entire washing—either sprinkling, or immersion, according to the situation of the agent, or the object of the action. It is unnecessary to cite all the passages in which this is demonstrated. To one or

purpose, under the Levitical law, the blood of the atonement is expressly called *the blood of sprinkling*. Isaiah, in announcing the office, and grace of Messiah, declares *he shall sprinkle many nations*. The prophet Ezekiel, in proclaiming the sanctifying influence of the gospel, does it by this figure; *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean*. And when the apostle would express, in the strongest terms, that purity of mind which, in our approaches to God, we ought to bring with us to the throne of grace, he says; *Let us come to him, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*.—But I forbear to multiply proofs. These are sufficient to demonstrate that either mode, by immersion, or by sprinkling, will answer the whole intention of the ordinance, as an emblem of that purity of life which becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The principal evidence on which the advocates for immersion, as essential to the rightful administration of this ordinance, rest their opinion, is an expression used by the apostle in his epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Colossians; *buried with him by baptism*. Whether this allusion be made to the practice of immersion, borrowed from the custom of bathing in warm climates, or not, it establishes no exclusive form for this ordinance. It is an expression highly figurative; and no argument can be safely rested on a figure of speech. It affords, at the utmost, only a collat-

planted in the likeness of his death ; and crucifying with him our old man." According to this reasoning, therefore, baptism should contain something in the mode of its administration corresponding to all these figures : so that, if the first figure necessarily implies the justification of the mode of baptising exclusively by immersion ; the last will, on the same ground, justify, and require the form of the church of Rome in baptising with the sign of the cross. But as the friends of immersion do not admit of the latter consequence, those who conform to the practice of baptising by sprinkling, with equal reason, do not think themselves bound by the former.

Upon the whole view of this subject, I conclude, and, I think, from the fairest reasoning, that the mode of administering baptism, whether by sprinkling, or immersion, is not essential to the validity of the ordinance, which requires only that the emblem of its cleansing and purifying virtue be significantly preserved.

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OF THE  
EXTERNAL SEALS  
OF THE  
**COVENANT OF GRACE.**

II. OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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OF THE  
EXTERNAL SEALS  
OF THE  
COVENANT OF GRACE.

II. OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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tions, therefore, imply that this ordinance is to be viewed as a festival of commemoration, in which the faithful meet at the same table, to testify their common interest in the great sacrifice of the cross, and their common faith, and hope, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

In reference to these objects, chiefly, it is, that these devotional acts have been styled the *communion*, the *eucharist*, or the *cup of blessing*, not only from the act of thanksgiving by which it is consecrated, or blessed for the use of the communicant, but from the praise and gratitude which should fill the heart of the humble believer in this holy service, and which is usually expressed with ardour by the voice, while occupied in celebrating this memorial of the infinite goodness and mercy of Almighty God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is denominated, likewise, by the apostle, the *breaking of bread* ; and, to mention no more, out of the many titles which it afterwards received in the church, it is, in the holy scriptures, called *our passover* ; because it was, under the new economy, evidently instituted in the room of that ancient sacrament under the antecedent dispensation. There existed indeed, an obvious analogy between the two ordinances. The paschal lamb was a type of Christ. That victim was offered in commemoration of the great deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, which had a typical allusion to the infinitely greater salvation of the cross, in which were consummated all the types of the altar. The

trator always blessed the elements, or pronounced a prayer of benediction and thanksgiving over them, and especially over the cup, distributing it afterwards to all who were present at the table. In reference to this act of devotion the psalmist exclaims, *I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord.* And, in the christian church the cup was given to the laity, as well as to the clergy, till, a short time after the commencement of the thirteenth century, a different custom began to prevail among the Latins. And, finally, in the council of Constance, in the year 1414, the laity were entirely prohibited from receiving the cup, as if it actually contained the blood of the Son of God. "It would be impious," said those blind and superstitious priests, "if any of the divine and heavenly drops should, by any accident among the communicants, be spilled upon the ground." For the same reason, those ignorant men ordered the bread to be formed into a wafer, and put into the mouth of each communicant, least any crumb should be lost, and that each might receive the whole *host*, as it was called, a superstitious term derived from the Latin, and signifying the *sacrifice*, or *victim*. The original custom, however, still prevailed throughout all the East, among the Greeks, the Russians, the Armenians, the Abyssinians, the Copts, and even the Nestorians, and Jacobins; and has been received in all the reformed churches.

*aming themselves*; a serious duty which is incumbent upon all before they adventure to *eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*—1 Cor. xi. 28.

The only circumstance farther, which it is of importance to remark in the administration of this ordinance, is, that, in all ordinary cases, it ought to be performed only by a person properly qualified, and ordained to the pastoral office by the government of the church. It was, in the first instance, dispensed by our Lord himself. Afterwards it fell to be administered by the apostles, and those whom they had set apart to preach the word, and dispense the sacraments. And, generally, it is requisite, for the sake of order, and common utility, that this holy office should be confined to those, who are the regular successors of the apostles, and ordained according to that form which the gospel has prescribed, or the church esteems best calculated for preserving purity of doctrine, and of manners.—Yet, where any society of christians is, from the nature of their circumstances, deprived of those aids, perhaps they ought to assemble for the worship of God, and may, without violence to the institutions of Christ, appoint men of prudence and piety, from among themselves, to lead in their devotions, and to preside in these sacred festivals of love. This is a liberty, however, which ought always to be used with the most profound caution, and only after the most serious conviction of its absolute necessity.



## MONIES, OR EXTERNAL SYMBOLS.

dispensation, and requires a worship  
piritual kind, it may well be made a  
erial elements, or symbols like these  
its religious services ? And I would  
to arise simply from a gracious con-

not to have loaded his worship with an unmeaning multitude of ceremonies. For, it is not more certain, that, on all just, and great occasions, sensible emblems properly chosen, have a powerful and useful effect, than that too great a multiplication of ceremonies, strongly inclines the mind to a frivolous superstition, substituting rites, and external forms in the room of true devotion and holiness of life.

#### OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

In different parts of the church, some errors have been introduced into this holy rite, but since the light which has so abundantly been shed upon it by the protestant writers, they are no longer in danger of producing any pernicious effect, and the palpable absurdity of Transubstantiation, in particular, hardly requires a serious refutation.—By this term, which, for a long time, misled, with almost magical effect, the church of Rome, was intended, the transmutation supposed to pass on the elements of bread and wine, into the real body and blood of Christ: an opinion, most evidently, contrary to reason, and common sense; and which has no support in the language of scripture, or the usages of the primitive ages. This doctrine contradicts the evidence of all our senses, by which alone we can form an accurate judgment on the qualities of material subjects. If our senses could be so far violated that the essences of flesh and blood could be covered under the sensible qualities of bread and

generis nos quidem sermonis utimur usitato, sed ecquon tam amentem esse putas, qui illud, quo vescatur Deum credat esse?" Cic. de nat. Deor. lib. 3. chap. 16. §. 41.

Transubstantiation is a doctrine of which we find nothing in the writers who flourished in the four, or five first centuries of the church. In the sixth century, the elevation of the *host*, as it began then figuratively to be called, was first introduced; not, however, for the purpose of adoration, but that all might see it, and that it might the better represent the elevation of Christ upon the cross. It was not, until the extreme ignorance of the twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, that this idolatrous opinion and practice generally prevailed.

The consequences, and abuses of this doctrine we have seen in the denial of the cup to the laity—the idolatrous adoration of the *host*—sending it to the absent—keeping it in their houses, and about their persons, as a charm—carrying it through the streets on occasions of great calamity—giving it to the dead, by laying it on their breasts, especially if they were priests, and even burying it with them as a passport to heaven.

#### OF CONSUBSTANTIATION.

It is so difficult entirely to divest the mind of its prejudices, and to cast off errors which have incorporated them-

ble church, requires, that those who have been initiated by baptism, should be introduced also to the participation of its ultimate sacrament in the Lord's Supper. This opinion arises from a misconception of the nature and design of the two ordinances; which may be learned from a small attention to the origin of the church. Baptism was designed to make a visible and public proposition of salvation on the terms of the New Covenant, to those who, otherwise, were the heirs of death, through the condemnation of the original dispensation. To every baptized infant this proposition of salvation is provisionally made, on the conditions of repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So far, then, the infant is the passive subject, or recipient of the divine mercy in this ordinance. And it is his visible warrant to embrace these gracious terms of our redemption. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, is an active service; and contains an active pledge of our having embraced the covenant, and of our fidelity to all its conditions. This places a material difference between the two ordinances, and requires, in particular, of those who would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, "that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience." A condition which cannot reasonably be required of infants.—Without a just knowledge of the nature and design of the ordinance, we cannot offer a rational, and acceptable service in it to Almighty God. Faith is requisite to give importance to the object of

formed in an irreverent manner, contributes to harden the heart, and alienate it more from real and vital holiness, these consequences, in a much higher degree, attend, or follow the abuse of an institution so sacred and solemn. In the first age of the church, many insincere disciples, only partially reclaimed from paganism, misled by the ideas and habits existing in the festivals of the heathen gods, introduced a licentiousness in its celebration, highly unbecoming the sanctity, and purity of the christian church. In that miraculous period, the disorder was consequently, followed by visible and frequently instantaneous judgments from Almighty God. *For this cause, saith the apostle, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* And, probably, to these effects chiefly, the same apostle had reference when he utters the following denunciation—"He that eateth, and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

These terrible examples of divine displeasure, thus miraculously inflicted, seem to have contributed to throw the christians of the following age into the opposite extreme of excessive fear, and superstitious veneration of this holy ordinance. Since miracles have ceased, the judgments which follow the abuse of the Lord's Supper, appear to be rather of a spiritual, than a temporal nature—lukewarmness in every pious feeling, and hardness of heart, which gradually leads to the total dereliction of the offices of piety. This fearful

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ON

**A FUTURE STATE.**

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ON

## A FUTURE STATE.

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**THE** last doctrine of revelation which remains to be considered, is that of our future state of being.—The hope of existing after the present life was not utterly lost from among mankind, even amidst the darkness and corruptions of paganism. But, to the vulgar mass, the prospect was so obscure, and the hope so uncertain, that it could afford but small excitement to duty in life, and to the timid, and miserable, but little consolation in their last moments. It was so blended with the melancholy phantoms of a superstitious imagination, it served rather to oppress than shed any comfort on the hour of death. We have seen in our disquisitions on natural religion, and its ultimate motives to virtue, that many of their sages were able to create to themselves more reasonable, but still dubious expectations of existing hereafter. But it is only in the word of God, and, especially, in the gospel of our blessed Saviour, that the trembling hopes of nature are rendered fixed and certain, and the obscurities of reason, are enlightened. And to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul it has added a principle which the human mind had never before dared to conceive ; I mean the resurrection of the

That we shall continue to exist from the moment of death, till the final introduction of our immortal state, the scriptures give us no reason to entertain a doubt, but wherein that intermediate condition shall consist, as they have not condescended to inform us, it would be presumptuous in us to frame an opinion. On the subject of the resurrection, and of our immortal life, they are as explicit as, perhaps, it is competent for our present state of frailty, and mortality to comprehend.

Let us, therefore, with the sacred writer, employ a few moments in contemplating the certainty and importance of this doctrine, its practical uses, and its spiritual consolations.—Its certainty can, to the christian, rest only on the express declaration of the word of God ; although, when thus communicated, many facts and analogies, drawn from the course of nature, concur to facilitate our conceptions, and strengthen our confidence in this precious hope. “The time is coming,” saith the infallible Spirit of truth, “when all they who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth, they that have done well to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.” It has always been a subject of anxious inquiry to human reason ; *with what bodies do they come ?* Can these corporeal systems, after they have been long dissolved into their original elements, and variously dispersed in a thousand different directions, and after they have successively passed, perhaps, into a thousand



inct. But, in a little time, we see it mount into the air in a new form, and adorned with the most beautiful colouring.

Of spiritual and celestial objects, which are so far above the reach of our present faculties, frequently, we are left to collect our judgments only from analogy. And although such analogies can never convey adequate images of things *which eye hath not seen, and of which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive*, yet they seem to throw some feeble rays of light upon them, and to offer some foundation on which the mind, exhausted by its own efforts, can rest. In casting our view around, then, nature teaches us important lessons, and presents to us many impressive images of the future resurrection of human nature. Some resemblance of it we see in the new creation which every vernal season produces, when all the glories of the year are seen to spring, if I may speak so, from the tomb of Winter. These images, indeed, are only imperfect representations, adapted to the weakness of our nature, of that great object of our faith. The only solid and immovable foundation of a christian's hope, as I have already said, is the word of God *but now is Christ risen, and become the first fruits of them that sleep*.

Another objection against the doctrine of a resurrection is drawn, from the ills and inconveniencies resulting to the soul from its union with the body in the present life. This slings-

apostle hath said, that all flesh is not the same in its outward form, and visible appearance ; but "there is one flesh of men, and another of beasts" though nourished by the same herbage ; "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another of the stars ;" though all proceeding from the same light. Not less difference may we expect to find, between our present tenements of clay, which, at death, return to their original dust, and those celestial temples, in which the glorified spirit shall dwell forever. Raised to heaven by the power and love of the Redeemer, to inhabit the worlds of light above, this corporeal system will be conformed in beauty and perfection to its immortal habitation. — "This mortal shall put on immortality. Sown in weakness it shall be raised in power ; sown in dishonor, it shall be raised in glory ; sown a natural," that is, a gross and animal "body, it shall be raised a spiritual body"—a body, inconceivably refined, and purified from the dregs of matter, and possessing, at once, the rapid energy, and the imperishable nature of spirit. It shall be invested with new forms, and be fitted with new organs, adapted to its celestial state ; and having attained its highest perfection, we have the same authority to declare that it shall for ever shine with undecaying lustre in the kingdom of God.

In addition to the christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which contains the most glorious hope of human nature, the resurrection of the body and its immortal exis-

redemption of the body.”—What, indeed, would be the pleasure of existence to the soul, if we could suppose it conscious of existence, deprived of the action, and aids of the senses, which are, at present, the only inlets of its knowledge, and the chief sources of its enjoyments?

As the christian, and scriptural doctrine of the resurrection corresponds, in this manner, with the dearest hopes, and wishes of the human heart, it contributes likewise, to assist the perceptions of faith. We are not left in total darkness concerning the nature of our future being. Some ideas we may frame with relation to this obscure subject, without the hazard of being entirely lost in the unsubstantial regions of fancy. The state of our future existence presents to us, no longer an inscrutable mystery. Although it offers to our hopes a condition of existence inconceivably improved and raised above the present, still we can discern between them some points of resemblance, which present to us ideas on that subject, at once intelligible to our reason, and infinitely precious to the heart.—In a future life, we have reason to believe, our faculties will be employed, in some measure, as here, but with an activity and vigor inconceivably augmented, in searching into the wonderful works of God, in admiring the order, the beauty, and harmony of the universal system; in adoring, and, with the angels, endeavouring to penetrate the astonishing mysteries of divine grace to man. Blessed, and eternal sources of knowledge, and felicity!

which disturb the harmony of this world ; of the range they may be permitted to enjoy, in society with one another, amid the glories of the heavenly world, to nourish, their celestial devotions, and diversify their holy enjoyments ; of those flights which they may be allowed to take together into distant provinces of the universal empire of God to collect knowledge, and to admire and adore him in the astonishing operations of his hands ; or of the raptures with which every ray of the Sun of righteousness will penetrate their hearts, when they turn their faces towards the heavenly Zion, the more immediate residence of the divine glory, to raise their common ascriptions of praise to the Father of the universe, and to recognize, at the foot of his throne, their boundless obligations to redeeming love.—But restraining all unlicensed excursions of fancy, exquisite, and now ineffable must be the felicity, springing from a thousand different sources, that shall arise from meeting in those blissful habitations, the friends who have been most tenderly and affectionately loved upon earth. Oh ! how is the religion of our blessed Saviour adapted to the finest feelings, and fitted to cherish the noblest sympathies of the human heart !—Away with that cold philosophy, which, at death, would devote our existence to eternal oblivion, and hopelessly rend asunder those delightful unions which form the dearest portion of ourselves ; the chief joy of our being.—Jesus ! Saviour ! who art the first fruit of the resurrection of the dead ! who art thyself the resurrection and the life ! we adore and bless thee who hast

lasting punishment of the wicked asserted in terms as explicit and strong as the life, and felicity of the pious; it is, therefore, equally entitled to our assent, and most imperiously commands our belief. Of the unrighteous it is said, "they shall be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone;" and it is added, "that the smoke of their torments ascendeth for ever and ever." In the final judgment of the world, we are assured that the Judge shall pronounce upon them this irrevocable sentence, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels*. These are strong figurative expressions intended to convey the certainty, and the fearful nature of the future sufferings of guilt; fire being employed as the hieroglyphic emblem of extreme torments of body, or of mind; and their eternal duration is indicated in the strongest terms that language can use. Objections are brought against this conclusion so interesting to human sympathy, not from scripture, as they ought to be, if they were well founded, but from a pretended reason, where reason is, and for ever must be utterly silent.

Eternal punishments are pronounced to be contrary to the natural perfection of the Deity which consists in universal goodness.—It is said to be contrary to the design of his moral government, which is intended for reformation rather than punishment; and aims finally, at the perpetuity of happiness to all virtuous minds.—In the last place it is strenuously argued, that eternal pains are disproportioned to the frailty of

implies its contrast. Opposite characters and qualities, become the objects of opposite purposes and feelings. In proportion to the love of goodness and virtue, must be the abhorrence of iniquity, and crime. And these must be as permanent as their subjects on the one side, and on the other ; that is, they must be eternal.

2. When again, it is affirmed that eternal suffering, in any part of the works of God, is contrary to the design and end of his universal government, which is reformation, rather than extermination, or the perpetual pains of any portion of his creatures.—Who, then, is competent to embrace in his mind the boundless extent of the divine government ; its objects, its ends, or the measures of its administration ? Or how shall a worm of dust pronounce on questions so high, and utterly beyond the ken of our limited faculties ? Take a single example of the possible benefits which may result to the righteous in their everlasting career of happy existence, from the continual view of the painful and unceasing sufferings inflicted upon hardened vice. The perpetuity of their virtue may be greatly assisted, and consequently their stability in happiness be not a little promoted by occasional discoveries of the issue of the most fortunate state of sin, presented to them as most afflictive, hopeless, remediless. We have the faithful promise of Almighty God for the certain preservation of the redeemed from falling. But surely this stability in virtue and happiness is not the result of any

made against the errors merely of frailty, but against obstinate and determined guilt, shewn, since the annunciation of a Saviour, by the rejection of his grace. If the sins of mankind are the offences of a frail and feeble nature, their sufferings will, undoubtedly, be proportioned to the imbecility of the offender; but their sinfulness, inhering in their nature itself, their guilt must co-exist with their being; and its penalties, of consequence have the same duration.—To the second part of this objection, respecting the shortness of life, it is reasonable to reply, that eternity has no reference to the length of this probatory state, but to the inherent virtue or vice of the subject of trial; for, if it were protracted ten thousand times, it could not bear the smallest proportion to our interminable existence. The wisdom of God has adapted the continuance of life, together with all its means of instruction, and grace, to our moral culture, and preparation for our eternal being; if, then, they fail of their proper object, the cultivation of our nature, and the sinner continues in his course of impiety, it can only be ascribed to the perversity of his nature, which, having exhausted the day of grace and mercy, leaves him thereafter, only to suffer the righteous retributions of eternity. Of these the duration must be exclusively learned from the written word. No reason can be assigned for the cessation of future punishment, unless it could be shewn, contrary to all probability, that the actual infliction of extreme pains would produce a reformation which the apprehension of them, aided by all the means of grace, un-

ing. It yields to the grave only the grosser parts of these mortal bodies. The temporary dissolution of the body, and the soul causes no intermission in the consciousness of happy existence. Even if the soul itself, according to the opinion of some good men, should sleep till the revivification of universal nature, there is no perception of time in the insensibility of this mortal sleep. The moment of dissolution touches upon the moment of our restoration to life. The grave, sanctified by the death, and triumphed over by the resurrection of our blessed Saviour, is made to all his disciples only the gate to a new, a glorious, and immortal existence. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!"



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**THE**  
**CONNEXION OF PRINCIPLE WITH PRACTICE,**  
**OR**  
**THE DUTY OF MAINTAINING SOUND AND EVANGELIC**  
**PRINCIPLES IN THE CHURCH.**

**A SERMON,**

**PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE**  
**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ; IN THE YEAR 1808.**

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# A SERMON,

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PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH; IN THE YEAR 1808.

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*Epistle of Jude, 3d verse.*—That you should contend earnestly for the faith  
once delivered to the saints.

THE physical order of things is evidently intended by the Creator to be subservient to the benefit of the moral world. And divine wisdom itself, in the arrangements of nature, and the disposition of providence, seems to be employed supremely in promoting the ends of divine goodness. In conformity with this order established in the universal system, God has connected the knowledge of truth, with the practice of duty, and the duties with the happiness of human nature. The connexion of truth with practical utility, is acknowledged universally in science. In religion alone it has been doubted, or denied, so far as to become even a fashionable maxim,—that it is of little importance to piety, or virtue, what opinions, upon these subjects, are maintained by mankind, provided their conduct in society be peaceable and honest. There are natural sentiments of right and wrong implanted in the human breast; and, to whatever errors in speculation the weakness of reason, or the prejudices of education, may have given birth, the moral instincts of our nature,

If, indeed, evangelic truth had no peculiar relation to sanctity of life, but any principles were equal to the ends of religion, the knowledge of it would not merit either the labor bestowed on its acquisition, or the praise ascribed to its possession; christianity itself would be deprived of its chief glory; and it would be indifferent to every purpose of piety, or virtue, whether we were christians or pagans, believers or infidels.

In the following discourse, I purpose, under the divine blessing,

I. In the first place, to illustrate the connexion that exists between duty, and evangelic truth; or generally between principles and conduct.

II. And in the next place, to urge the exhortation of the apostle, to *contend earnestly for the faith*, the fountain, and comprehensive sum of all good principles in religion.

I. Permit me, then, in the first place, to illustrate the connexion that exists between duty, and evangelic truth, and in general, between principles and conduct.

As the great springs of human action lie in the passions and appetites, the desires and wants of men, so the control and direction of these springs is to be found only in an un-

always done, to palliate insincerity, fraud, intemperance, or lust, the ties of moral obligation are thereby necessarily relaxed? Could you, on great and critical occasions, rely on the integrity of a man who should avow such principles? Would you be willing to entrust to him the honor and virtue of your families, where he could violate them with secrecy, or with impunity? Would not his passions, his interests, his pleasures be thenceforward the supreme law of his conduct?

But does not dissolution of manners frequently precede, and itself become the cause of the general corruption of principle, in individuals, and in nations? It does.—And this fact places the truth of the proposition which I have assumed to illustrate, in a new light. For so powerful is the force of truth upon the heart, that men cannot preserve the peace of their own bosoms, amidst the conflict of their principles, with their actions. They are obliged, therefore, if they do not reject the law of Christ, to set themselves to corrupt and modify it if possible, to the standard of their inclinations. If the law of Christ has not been able effectually to constrain their obedience, they must shut their eyes against its light, or study, by every subtil artifice, to pervert its spirit.

The efficacy of divine truth early instilled into the mind, and received with a docile temper, is conspicuous, to a candid observer, in the excellent fruits which commonly proceed from a virtuous and pious education, conducted with

stances, that the frequency of the reproach has been mistaken for the commonness of the effect. And the fact, where it does exist, may usually be traced to some gross defect of prudence, or of skill, in the conduct of their education.

I acknowledge, indeed, and it is only a confirmation of our doctrine, that those who have finally broken through the restraints of a pious discipline, like those who have burst the bounds of modest and of decent manners, are usually more profligate than other sinners; harrassed in their evil courses by their early principles, they are often tempted to run to greater excesses than others, that they may, at once, if possible, extinguish the distressing light of truth, and drown the reproaches of their own consciences.

Against the preceding reasonings an objection has been raised from two interesting facts—one that we not unfrequently see men of vicious manners professing the best principles; another, that we find good men among all sects of christians. True it is, that orthodox opinions in religion may be ostensibly avowed by men of very exceptionable morals. They may be merely modes of speaking received by inheritance, or adopted as the distinction of a party; while, at the same time, they have not entered deeply into the convictions of reason, nor taken possession of the sentiments of the heart.

numbers who adorn, by their practice, the doctrine of God their Saviour. But, among the truly pious of all denominations, there is a greater harmony of sentiment, and of faith, than they themselves, in the jealousy of party, in the pride of disputation, and even in the delicate apprehensions for the truth, which some good men, who have moulded all their feelings in religion to certain set forms of words, are willing to allow. In terms they differ more than in spirit.

Unhappily, indeed, there are in our age, as there were in the age of the apostles, those who wear, and who glory in the christian name, who yet remove the basis of christianity, by *denying the only Lord God, even our Lord Jesus Christ*. But as then they were, they still are, known by the coldness of their piety, and the laxness of their moral system. *Spots* are they in the church, in which should exist only the continual feast of christian love; unfructifying *clouds without rain, borne about by the winds* of human passions. It would be more honour to the cause of Christ, or rather less dishonour, if they would renounce the name which they abuse.

Having thus far endeavoured to illustrate the connexion between truth and duty; that is, between faith, or the genuine doctrines of the gospel, and holiness of living—

and reduce it to plain and simple propositions, here, I confess, is some room for uncertainty and doubt. Here it is that men introducing their own speculations, and mingling their own philosophic systems with the word of God, have corrupted its simplicity, and made the christian church, like the schools of Greece, a theatre for the conflict of contending opinions. Are the divine scriptures, then, of doubtful interpretation? Or do they afford any ground for this gladiatorial play of intellect? No, they are full of light; but like all the manifestations of the will of God, in the works both of creation and providence, they are liable to be misinterpreted by ignorance, or perverted by some dishonesty of the heart, or by some mistaken bias of education. They are a fountain of truth to those who submit themselves with humility to the wisdom of God, and who, with genuine simplicity of spirit, have no other aim but to discern in them their own duty, and no concern but to understand the will of their heavenly Father, in order to obey it. If, with these dispositions, we approach the study of the holy scriptures, although some unavoidable errors should still adhere to the frailty of the human understanding, we cannot materially swerve from that system of truth which, as disciples of Christ, we are called to defend. And in that field of human infirmity in which we may be permitted to err, we shall find ground for the mutual exercise of charity with our fellow-christians,

fore, will he embrace it from the heart, and with unceasing zeal will he study to promote it.

A superior duty is imposed upon the ministers of religion who are appointed as *watchmen upon the walls of Zion*, and as heralds to the world of the *glad tidings of salvation*. They are *set*, in the language of the apostle, *for the defence of the gospel*. Among their first cares, it ought to be, as far as possible, to preserve the church from corruption of principle, and to cultivate within it that unity of sentiment, and harmony in interpreting the great doctrines of religion, so necessary to the peace and order of the *body of Christ*. When conflicting doctrines are preached in the same church, the principles of the people become unsettled. To temporary scepticism, succeeds indifference to truth; a state of mind not much less dangerous than error itself.

I fear not to be charged with illiberality, though I assert that, if among those who are otherwise agreed in the distinguishing doctrines of christianity, there are such differences of opinion, even upon minor points, as would disturb the harmony of their devotions, let them worship God in separate communions. The existence of various denominations may even be attended with some advantages; and where their members are found walking agreeably to the commandment of Christ, they may embrace one another in the spirit of christian charity. But union in the same body ought sacredly to

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be preserved. Division on the one hand, and on the other that extreme of charity, which indicates an indifference to truth, are, in the highest degree, pernicious. "Be of one mind. Embowels us to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace."

But the importation of the sacred writer, in this passage, implies an obligation not only to maintain the purity of the faith, and, as far as possible, its unity; but to defend it against every enemy, and to promote with all our powers of persuasion and reason, its holy influence over the hearts of men.

The humble and benevolent religion of Jesus Christ, always obnoxious to the corruptions of the human heart, is obliged incessantly to combat with open, or insidious enemies, and to meet them in their ever new, and ever varying modes of attack. It is assailed by inveterate foes from without, or betrayed by false and pretended friends within the bosom of the church itself. In no age have enemies more numerous, or more subtil, erected themselves against the standard of the cross. Not, indeed, armed with power, and followed by flames, as in ages past; but more to be dreaded, perhaps, by pure and undefiled religion, they come armed with all the subtilty of a false and ostentatious science, and supported by the dissolution of the public manners.

The press is often a good criterion of the state of the public morals, and the public taste. Look over the lists of new publications in Europe. Examine the catalogues of those writings which obtain the favour of the most numerous class of readers, both there, and in our own country. What do you see in these writers but continual incentives thrown out to corrupt the imagination, and inflame the passions of the young? What but a shameless sophistry designed to emancipate every lust of the heart from the remaining restraints of religion? What but continual efforts to undermine the foundations of the gospel, and boldly to tear down the walls and the ramparts of our christian Zion? Even the fences of natural religion are attempted to be overthrown. The existence of God has been called in question by a delirious philosophy; his providence over the world has been resolved into contingency, or fate; the apprehensions of futurity have been derided as childish fears; and human nature robbed of its most precious treasure in the hopes of a happy and immortal existence, only that religion may not derive from them any effectual control over the consciences of men. All the powers of learning, wit, and perverted genius, have been assembled against the glory of the Saviour. A kind of traditionary respect, indeed, is still pretended to be paid to the name of virtue: but a name it is, and nothing more. It does not prevent the outrage of almost every duty which a creature owes to his Creator. It does not impede the indulgence of the most atrocious passions under the abused name of honour;

danger, which it may be necessary to encounter in the Redeemer's cause.

Will it not then be esteemed reasonable to assert, that the ministers of religion ought always to stand in the foremost ranks of literature and science in their country. And it is a fact which will hardly be disputed, that, hitherto, the world has owed more to its religious orders for the cultivation, and progress of letters, than to all other classes of society. This is a general proposition which extends beyond the christian church, to those in every nation who are supremely occupied in the studies and concerns of religion. The Magians and the Bramins, the priests of India and of Persia were the scholars, and instructors of those great nations. The *schools of the prophets* were the seminaries of literature among the people of Israel. The sacerdotal colleges of Egypt were the schools of Greece, which afterwards became the school of the universe. After the overthrow of the Roman empire by the northern tribes, nothing contributed so much to extend among those ignorant and rude barbarians, the influence of christianity, and by degrees to ameliorate their savage manners, as the superior knowledge, as well as piety of the great body of the christian clergy. In the churches and monasteries, to whatever objections the latter afterwards became liable, were preserved those sparks of ancient learning which served to re-kindle the flame of modern science. To the clergy, almost exclusively, we

ever important, in nearly the same language becomes insipid even to a pious audience. To every *candidate* for this holy office, therefore, let me insist, that his preparations for appearing in it with dignity and usefulness, should be neither superficial, nor hasty ; and to every *minister*, may I be permitted to add, that his studies never should end but with his life.

If those who publish the gospel to mankind ought to be scribes well instructed in the law of Christ, for the edification of the church, not less requisite is it that they be furnished with all the resources of human science, in order to repel those enemies of the faith, who, by an abuse of learning, and a shameful misapplication of the talents which God has given them, are endeavouring to overturn, to their foundations, his glorious city, and temple. The philosophers are setting themselves against the ministers of religion, the schools against the altars. But wielding as you do, in this spiritual conflict, the mighty force of truth, your encouragement is, that, you must prevail, if you are not reproachfully delinquent to the king of Zion. I am aware that many pious men regard all considerations of this nature as partaking too much of the spirit and policy of the world. They profess to place all their reliance, not on any human means, but solely on the omnipotence of divine grace ; and strangely seek a refuge for their own indolence in the abused doctrine of the operations of the Holy Spirit. Almighty God has es-

reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Meditate upon these things. Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all !” Can the divine author intend, according to the views of some weak and enthusiastic sects, that, in devoutly reading the sacred writings, God imparts some *extraordinary* influx of the Holy Spirit, to render their meaning clear ; thus making one inspiration necessary originally to communicate the scriptures to the apostles and prophets of old, and another to the church, in the present day, to enable it to understand them ? With prayer and pious meditation, indeed, every christian ought devoutly to study them. The more nearly we can raise the soul to the tone of pious fervor, and sublime devotion, in which the prophets and apostles composed their sacred hymns, their divine histories, and epistles, the more we shall perceive the spiritual beauties of the word of God ; the more clear, and impressive will its heavenly truths be to the heart. But let all who are preparing to enter into this holy office be assured that there is hardly an art, or branch of knowledge, in the whole circle of science, or of literature, from which some useful illustration of the sacred writings may not be drawn.

*In earnestly contending for the faith*, in the next place, *talents* alone are not sufficient to acquit your high and holy duties to God and the church. *Fidelity* in the discharge of all the functions of the sacred ministry is not less necessary.

unholy living, to embrace the principles of infidelity ; but we see borne on the tide philosophers, legislators, magistrates, those who should be the instructors of mankind, who should be the guardians of the public morals, who, seated in the throne of the laws, should be examples of virtue and obedience to the people. It already threatens to bear with it the mass of society, if Almighty God, to whose throne we daily send our supplications to defend us from this calamity, do not interpose to arrest the overwhelming flood, saying to its rage "hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther ; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." From the prevalence of corrupted manners, I see a fatal evil invade the church itself, "Because iniquity abounds the love of many waxes cold." The *wise*, and even the *watchmen* on the walls of Zion, seem to be *asleep* along with the secure and unapprehensive crowd of *foolish virgins*. The present seems to be the reign of evil over a great part of the world which calls itself christian. And Christ may now say as he did to his persecutors and murderers, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

If we see the blessed gospel openly and almost triumphantly insulted by powerful enemies, is it not also in many parts of the church, insidiously corrupted by false friends ? Where it is still preached with a degree of evangelic purity, does it not seem to fall powerless from the lips of those who are appointed to proclaim its grace to the world ? For many years

ever, which may chequer the mysterious aspect of divine providence, one truth is certain, one truth should console you, my dear brethren, "be you faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life."

*Now to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, be glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end !—AMEN !*

THE END.









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